OVERLAND IN A COVERED WAGON

JOAQUIN MILLER

Louise K. Deer
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OVERLAND IN A COVERED WAGON

MY CRADLE WAS A COVERED WAGON, POINTED WEST.

[page 9]

OVERLAND
IN A COVERED WAGON

An Autobiography

BY

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OVERLAND IN A COVERED WAGON

Grateful acknowledgment is given
Abbie Leland Miller for permission
to publish this account.

INTRODUCTION

The account that follows is an autobiography of the poet who is commonly known as Joaquin Miller, although his real name was Cincinnatus. He assumed the Joaquin soon after he had published an article in defence of Joaquin Murietta, a Mexican brigand. In 1870 he set out for England, where the first volume of his poems, *Songs of the Sierras,* was published in 1871.

England was quick to hail him as the great poet of America, and he was fêted everywhere. This made him all the more sensitive to the scant recognition his poems had received from his own countrymen, which was mainly due to grave faults in many of the earlier ones.

Mr. Miller had received only the most meager education from the little schools that his father had taught in the wilderness. When he began to write, he lacked the training that was essential for writing great poetry, but he afterwards greatly improved his art. His well known *Columbus* is one of the many fine poems that he wrote. He had a poet's eye for beauty and color, and a depth of feeling for express-

ing it. He was a master hand at painting word pictures.

Consequently, his literary genius often shows to better advantage in prose than in poetry. His last literary work, and unquestionably his best, was the *Introduction* that he wrote for the complete edition of his poems. It was his best work because when he wrote it, he had for many years been associating with educated people and had acquired a mastery of English that he had formerly lacked.

The *Introduction* is here published under the more descriptive title of *Overland in a Covered Wagon*. It is the only story of pioneer life in the Middle West, and the westward journey to Oregon and California that can be ranked as literature. In fact, it tells a part of the story of the settlement of the West that was never fully told before,—the courage, bravery, and endurance of the women and children.

Unfortunately events that might have formed an earlier chapter are omitted from the account, and I have tried to give a foreword to explain events that depend for their meaning on persons and places of an earlier time.

An earlier chapter would have told about a schoolmaster named Hulings Miller, who went from Cincinnati, where he had been brought up, to teach a

little backwoods school in Liberty, Union County, Ohio. There he fell in love with beautiful Margaret deWitt, whose father was considered rich in those days; for, besides his farm he had a sawmill, a grist-mill, a tannery, and a mill for making flaxseed oil. It was a big industrial center for the time.

In the course of a year a wedding followed the acquaintance, and the bride's wedding dress of satin cost forty dollars, an enormous sum at that time, and she boasted that she had six silk dresses besides. It was well that she had them; for many long years passed before she again had the means to buy any others. The bridegroom, a Quaker, was read out of meeting for marrying a member of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Father deWitt provided a generous dowry for his daughter, but most of it went to purchase merchandise for a little store that his son-in-law opened in Liberty, soon after the marriage. The business never prospered. The storekeeper trusted everybody, and in the course of a few years he was deeply in debt for merchandise to replenish his stock. The sheriff sold the store and most of the household things of the young family, including the deWitt silver spoons, of which we shall hear more hereafter.

Margaret Miller had a far better mind for business than her husband, and after his experience in the

store she kept the family purse, or it always would have been empty.

The story begins with the covered wagon on the way from Ohio to Indiana. It was during that journey that Joaquin Miller was born, November 10, 1841. The father had been engaged to teach a school in Randolph County, Indiana, and the family with all its earthly possessions were in the wagon.

The first house they lived in in Randolph County had been abandoned by the owner. They moved to the Miami Reservation and had a home of their own, which the neighbors helped to build. Mr. Miller was trusted wherever he went. He was made Justice of the Peace, the humblest magistrate in our system of government. From time to time he conducted trials and pronounced judgment. He also performed marriages, for which he was paid in the currency of the times, a coonskin or a bag of corn or beans. Between terms he sometimes worked in a mill for fifty cents a day.

Mrs. Miller was not less industrious than her husband. In a cabin with all the inconveniences of pioneer days, she did the cooking, the washing, the cleaning, the mending, and the hundred and one things that housekeeping required. She spun the wool and the flax and wove them into homespun, and made the clothes for every member of the

family. Besides all this, from time to time she made an extra bolt of cloth to sell at the store or exchange for some necessities. Such were the people who laid the foundations of this nation.

In the early part of the seventeenth century the settlements along the Atlantic seaboard gradually expanded westward until they reached the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. They served as a barrier for a time, but gradually hunters of the type of Daniel Boone crept through the mountain passes and drove the Indians farther westward, and settlers soon followed into Kentucky, Ohio, and other states east of the Mississippi River.

However, the settlement of the states west of the Appalachians went forward very slowly. Kentucky did not become a state until 1792, Ohio, in 1803, and Illinois, in 1818; and these, and the other states in the Mississippi valley were all very sparsely populated when the great exodus to Oregon and California began. But the people who were adventurous enough to settle the Middle West were among the first to abandon the fields they had cleared and the homes they had built. The first to drag their covered wagons on to the Pacific Coast.

There was so much new land available for settlers in the Mississippi valley that the slogan, "The crest of the Rockies must forever be the western boundary

of the United States," was often heard in the halls of Congress. Then came the Mexican War and subsequent events that added California to the Union and compelled a broader view.

The Northwest Territory was saved to the United States by the splendid efforts of explorers like Lewis and Clark, Marcus Whitman, Fremont, and by fur traders like John Jacob Astor, who had established trading posts all the way from St. Louis to the mouth of the Columbia River. The handful of backwoodsmen who followed them had succeeded in holding the vast region against the colonizing efforts of the Northwest Company, the Hudson Bay Company, and other British trading companies.

When the emigration to Oregon began in earnest, the Government made not the slightest effort to find the best routes for them, build bridges or ferries, or provide any protection against hostile Indians. Its action was merely passive. As far as it was concerned, the settlers could go if they wanted to, but the Government would have nothing to do with the matter.

And go they did, in ever increasing numbers, first to Oregon, and then to California, which was admitted as a state three years after it was ceded to the United States by Mexico. The routes were soon marked by the graves of those who fell by

the wayside, but multitudes pressed on and came to the end of the journey.

They were men and women who had faith in God and themselves, and they would not turn back. Well does the author say of them at the end of his account, "In those days there were giants in the land"; and their descendants who now inhabit the Golden West may well be proud of their ancestors.

OVERLAND IN A COVERED WAGON

CHAPTER I

CAMP AND CABINS

My cradle was a covered wagon,[1] pointed west. I was born in a covered wagon, I am told, at or about the time it crossed the line dividing Indiana from Ohio, wherein my mother was born. Her people had come up from the Yadkin River country, North Carolina, whither they had gone with the Boones[2] from Berks County, Pennsylvania; devoted Quakers in quest of a newer land, where there might be less friction. Daniel Boone's mother was a most devout Quaker and tried to keep her sons content to remain in the Yadkin valleys, but Daniel, declaring that he could not live on shadows and that the deer of that land were little more than shadows, gradually led his people out beyond the Alleghenies, west. Most of them went to Kentucky, but some went to Ohio, and then into Indiana.

[1] The numbers at various places in the text refer to explanatory notes at the back of the book.

People built their homes near each other in the early days—danger, if not desire, made them clannish. My mother's people were Dutch, not Germans, as has been so often said, and they were the oldest Dutch in the land—the Falls and the Witts, deWitts, at home. They ferried the Ohio at Cincinnati and ascending the hill pitched tent about where the university now stands; where the venerable Mrs. Fall died and was buried.

The War of 1812 took most of these restless men into the field. General Proctor and Tecumseh[3] came down together from Canada; and the elder Harrison was sent to oppose them. Governor Shelby of Kentucky called for 1,500 men—about all the new State, the first to enter the Union, could muster.

My grandfather Miller, of Scotch stock, from Kentucky, was among the first of those who answered the call, and fell at Fort Meigs on the Maumee River. I have read he was an officer, but hope and believe he was of the ranks. Please let the dead patriot escape the persecution of idiots seeking an ancestry. He had left his family at Cincinnati, where my papa grew up, was educated and early became a school teacher.

In those days, the teachers, as a rule, were foreign born, mostly Scotch or Irish. The boys in a certain

district, a little distance back from the Ohio River, had "turned out" their teacher, a big Scotch bully, for refusing to provide a barrel of Xmas apples, a custom of the times, and as neither pupils nor teacher would yield, the trustees sent to Cincinnati for a substitute.

My papa, then a student, answered the call. He was a most painstaking teacher. His penmanship[4] was perfect. Years after his death, while in New York, I received a letter with the address so like that I had been in the habit of receiving from him that it startled me. It proved to be a kindly letter from the mayor of Kingston, New York, asking if I were not the son of his early teacher, and he proceeded to tell me how they had instituted the "lockout" against their big Scotch teacher who had been in the habit of beating them.

Then he told me how the new teacher had called them up the first morning and said, "Boys and girls, one word before we open school: I have been sent to teach you, not to beat you. I never struck any human being a blow in my life; and I never will. I want to be kind to you and I want you to be kind to me. I need your kindness, and I think you need mine. Let us try and be friends for a week, at least, and then if you are not entirely satisfied, I will gladly go back to Cincinnati."

My very first recollection is as vivid as could be any event of yesterday. My papa was moving his little family in a covered wagon from Liberty, Union County, Indiana, to a cabin in Randolph County, where he was going to teach school; but the wagon got stalled in the quicksand [5] of a swollen stream and he had to get out into the water, to his waist, carrying us all out, one at a time, on his back. That made the load lighter.

It took him and mother a long time to get the horses and wagon out and over the stream, but they were very patient and quiet about it and built a big fire [6] and camped there for the night. It was my first camp, the first of a lifetime, mainly of camps and I was exultant with delight. The horses had hay and oats from the feed trough that hung at the back of the wagon and the rattling of the bridles and harness and the munching of the hay was as music I had heard in another world.

Then mother made supper as we dried our clothes by the roaring fire and spread a table cloth on the grass under the stars and we all sat down on the ground and papa said grace and thanked God that we were all safe across the angry waters. As the hearty meal concluded, mother went to the wagon and taking out a bottle of preserves she came and sat down by papa and slyly unrolled from tissue

paper three little silver teaspoons, and handed one to each of her three little boys.

"Why, Margaret," said papa.

Then mother laid her head on his shoulder and cried. I had never seen mother cry before and it was a long time before we could eat the preserves. I never saw the little spoons any more, but wondered a thousand times why mother cried and what became of the little teaspoons. Nearly thirty years after, when the world was coming my way a little, I went back to my mother's people there, none of whom I had ever seen to remember, and told a venerable aunt of this, my earliest recollection and the incident about the teaspoons, and asked her why mother had cried.

She shook her head sadly, and then told me that after Grandpapa Witt had divided up his ample fortune with his many children that papa had aspired to be a merchant—"storekeeper" it was called then. But being too openhanded, he had the sheriff in the house in less than a year. In those days nothing was exempt--nothing, not even your bed, or tableware. But mother had saved the three teaspoons for her three little boys—a blessed deed for dear mother, but papa did not know it until then, and in the simplicity of his honest heart he felt on seeing them that the sheriff should have had the

three teaspoons along with all the other things.

I recall Randolph county only as a sea of sugar trees, with here and there a little island of stumps, a cabin and a struggling little field of corn encircled with a high rail fence—too high for us little boys to climb. We, in going to school or to the sugar camp, always had a "creep hole." Gates were not known in those days. The cabin in which we found ourselves the day after we had "stalled" in the stream was one that had been abandoned by the owner of the ground.

The school house was a cabin with but one room and a huge fireplace that took up nearly the entire end of the edifice. The three big girls that came to school hung their shawls and poke bonnets on pegs behind the door. There were about a dozen big boys, and they and papa kept the big fireplace roaring and blazing. This was the only way to keep warm. The floor was the solid earth and the windows were long, narrow strips of greased paper. This gave not such a bad light as might be imagined; nor was it at all primitive. I have seen in the later years of my life whole cities in the interior of China with no other windows in their finest houses than oiled paper.

These big boys would snowball, whoop, and hurrah during recess, after they had cut and carried

in plenty of wood; but they were good boys and tried hard to improve. Most of them were full grown, and none of them aspired to anything beyond reading and writing. The writing desks were made of big puncheons,[8] hewn from maple logs, resting on enormous pegs driven into the wall. Papa made all the pens from goose quills brought in by the big boys and set all the "copy."

The big boys were good to papa and very good natured toward my elder brother and myself, the only little ones in school. One of these tall and ungainly big boys went to Congress, then to the Mexican war, became a famous general, then was made governor of Oregon, then Senator, and in the early sixties was chosen as candidate for Vice President on the ticket with Breckenridge, who was beaten by Abraham Lincoln.

There was one big boy, Alexander, who came to school entirely barefooted, although there was frost on the ground and often snow. Papa would not let him help getting in the firewood, and in return Alec would be first at school in the morning and have a roaring big fire going by the time "the master" came.

Everybody was very, very poor. The scholars had to pay their own tuition entirely; the free[9] school had not yet penetrated the dense maple tree wilder-

ness of that region. The only source of income was the sugar camp, supplemented by an occasional coon skin. These were "cash" at 50 cents and sugar was ready money at a round figure, for the Indians[10] who had sold their sugar camps bought the sugar; but the season was short for the sugar camps at best and poverty prevailed with piteous uniformity.

At last there was a breath of spring in the tossing tops of the maple trees and gray, black and fox squirrels[11] began to leap from branch to branch overhead and chatter and quirk their tossy tails, the crows cawed and cawed from the tallest tree tops, the blue jay jawed us from the spice and hazel bush as we passed, and school was dismissed, for it was "sugar making time."

Papa and mother made their sugar camp[12] half a mile from the cabin in the middle of a great gray maple tree grove and hung up thee big iron kettles on a cross beam and against these they rolled great logs on either side, filling in the space under the kettles with kindling wood and chunks. Papa had worked continually every spare hour, except Sunday when he had a Bible class at the school house, making sugar troughs and spiles.

The troughs were made by splitting short basswood logs in twain and then cutting out the inside, making a little trough about three feet long and

THE STEAM SURGED UP FROM THE SUGAR KETTLES.

six inches deep. The spiles were driven into auger holes, piercing at an upward angle a little notch chipped into the soft gray side of the generous maple tree. Then there were little grooves, leading down to the spiles. All the trees had been tapped from time immemorial by the Indians, and they were badly scarred by a thousand tomahawks. But they seemed to have forgiven all this when papa tapped them this early spring, and the sap ran so generously that you could hear it not only dripping, but actually streaming from the spiles into the new white troughs. The Indians liked my parents, who worked not only from dawn to dusk but often till midnight boiling the sap, and bought the big forty pound cakes of sugar as fast as they could be made.

There was an ancient hollow oak near the camp which had been used by the Indians as a shelter in sugar time, and there we little boys were very happy, waking up now and then and looking through the natural door or window to see the steam surging up from the kettles out of the great cracking heaps of logs and to look and wonder at our toiling parents with love and silent reverence.

After awhile Grandpapa Witt came, with a little more dowry for mother, and with his practical good sense had plans perfected to move the family to the Miami Reservation; half of which was about to be

opened to settlement. With what money he had brought and my parents had made, a good team, cow and six sheep were got together and again we "moved."

The covered wagon proceeded in the narrow rough road and we three little old, very old, prematurely old, boys, brought up behind with the cow and six fat and docile sheep.

Happy? Very, very happy, but we had heard mother crying in the night so many times during the last year, had seen papa so sad all the time in his hard and continual toil that we were like old men now, even in childhood. Instead of toys and games we took to the stock for diversion, loved the cow, rode her, "petted her" and named the sheep pet names, and taught each one to stop, turn about and even to come back to us at call, as we slowly made our exodus from the sugar camp to the Miami Reservation.

The rush of settlers for the newly opened half of the old Miami Reservation on the Massassinewa River, a broad, clear and most beautiful stream, populous with fish and banked by groves of wild flowers and ancient apple trees, was so great that we had to go about three miles down from the "settlements," as the older part of Grant County was called, before finding vacant land. This three miles

was a solid wood, dense, dark and full of wonder; not a cabin, nor a "clearing," only little camps, a covered wagon and a tent or so here and there.

Papa got a good claim on the banks of Cart Creek and about a mile from the south bank of the beautiful river. The woods were dense indeed and a road had to be cut for the wagon. But the generous neighbors came from far about and opened a road, cut down trees, hewed logs with broad axes and, as I remember it now, a house was built and covered with "shakes"[13] held in place by weight poles, for there were no nails, and a flat floor of puncheons laid, as if we had an Aladdin's lamp—so suddenly and so gently was it all done.

Bed quilts and coverlets which mother's own hand had pieced or woven, were hung up for doors, greased paper was pasted up for windows, a fireplace of stones from the creek, with broad flat rocks from the river for a hearth, and we were at home in "our own house."

We two elder boys, four and six, had been given tomahawks by the kindly Indians on setting out for this new home and now we hacked and heaped brush all about, clearing, clearing, clearing. It is very wonderful what a boy can do with a hatchet. Papa told us over and over all about George Washington; and I remember feeling very sorry that he

never had had such opportunities to be happy.

A great elm, not the popular Eastern shade tree, but the rare slippery elm, the bark of which is "good medicine," stood near the house, a menace in storms, and this papa felled. What a crash! And then he measured off the first ten feet for a rail-cut and proceeded to split it. Mother was busy making Jimmy his first pants, and she, wanting to surprise him with his new dignity, had us older boys with our industrious hatchets take him out to papa.

"Splits like a ribbon," shouted papa as we came to where he, with maul and iron wedge, had opened the great elm trunk. And wild with delight he kept on making rails. I never knew a rail-cut to split so beautifully. It was as easy as if the log had been a mighty watermelon. He turned out rails almost as fast as we could count them, fragrant, perfect in fashion, as if cut with a saw and so light in weight that we two boys, one at each end, could easily lift them out of his way, while he kept on with maul and iron wedge and ax till he had more than 200. Then he hurriedly put up a fence, a beautiful, fragrant, red and yellow fence.

Then he caught up Jimmy, kissed and hugged and set him down in the corner of his fence.

"Run in and tell mother Jimmy is in a fence corner."

"Where? Where is Jimmy did you say?"

"Why out there in the fence corner. Come and see."

She hastened out, the new pants in her hand, and there she found Jimmy, a lord and emperor in his own right, in a fence corner which papa had fashioned with his own untried and not overstrong hand that very hour. And then they took off his little petticoat and put on his first pants. I can not see why they both should have cried; but they did, as they leaned over and caressed him while we bigger boys looked on silently in piteous wonder. Then they set him on the fence and laughed. At which we boys shouted and danced all about with delight.

The autumn weather was beautiful, beautiful. The woods were fragrant with the glory of the Indian summer, a sea of indescribable color; a burning bush on every hand, and the Infinite visible on the minutest tawny fiber underfoot or glittering leaf of gold overhead.

That night our heaps of brush, having been made dry and combustible from the warm winds, were set on fire by our parents as we three slept together in the cabin at the foot of their bed. The great flames lighted up the house through the improvised window panes, and we two boys starting up ran out in fear. But seeing our parents happy in their hard

tasks, returned and watched them through the window.

Years ago I was asked by some ladies of that region to recall some incident touching our family at that early date, and I set down this as the first recollection in my life. And so it was on the spur of the moment, but since the death of these two brave and silent builders of the State, I have recalled not only the fashionings of the first fence of all that district, but many an earlier tender memory of these scenes and times of those two most lovable Soldiers of Civilization.

CHAPTER II

LIFE AMONG THE INDIANS OF INDIANA

I do not know how or even why my father was made a magistrate[14]—maybe appointed by the governor at request of the new settlers in the new neighborhood. I am only certain that it was not only without his request, but without his knowledge or consent. He was the most shy man I have ever met in a long life of contact with my fellow-man. But for all that he was Squire or Judge Miller from that day till up in his seventy-third year, when he himself passed on and up to judgment. Whenever he sat down in his many immigrations he was elected squire, and had to perform marriages and to hear petty troubles and pass judgment on his neighbors.

The first trial that impressed itself on my mind was that of some Indians. The rule established by the agent across the river among the Indians was to the effect that so long as they remained on the reservation they should judge themselves and rule according to their traditions and sense of justice; but that if they left the reservation and went over on the white man's ground, for which they had been paid

IT WAS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT FIRE COULD BE MADE TO COME OUT OF THE END OF A LITTLE STICK.

and were still receiving generous annuities, they must abide by the white man's judgments.

There was a bad white man named George Sparks (there are always bad white men hovering around where there are good Indians with good money), and he had a "doggery" [15] over on the other side of Pipe Creek in the edge of the settlements. The narrow little trail over which Indians could ride their little ponies led from the reservation to this bad place by way of our new home. Indians often stopped in on their way back. Once some tall splendid fellows in their red and yellow blankets got down at the cabin door and standing in the middle of our floor, struck some sulphur matches [16] and held them up for mother to see them burn. What a miracle! I guess they had never seen matches before. I know mother never had, and it was hard to believe that fire could be made to come out of the end of a little stick, and her surprise was sincere and deep. This delighted the simple-hearted Indians, and, with many a "haw-haw," they rode away in their long single file through the brush toward Pipe Creek.

After they had gone mother and I and the rest of us picked up the dead stumps from the floor and rubbed them hard on the hearth stone, but no fire. Papa wore one entirely out and hurt his finger on the rough stone before he gave it up. He was full

of wonder that he, who knew all sorts of books, could not get fire out of a little stick as well as a blanket Indian.

On the return from one of these too frequent trips to the Pipe Creek doggery they were noisy and rode with uncertain seat. And they had a poor battered and bleeding Indian tied with a rope, led in the rear, with a rope around his neck. Four of the Indians, the oldest of a numerous band, were sober Indians at the head of the unsteady party. They tied their horses to the new fence, completed now, and selected the lowest place; led by the sober Indians they all came in and squatted in the yard around their prisoner. Then a sober old man asked for the white man to come and judge them all.

Papa stood in the door. Mother, who always had a natural dignity, gave him the only chair, and he sat down looking severely at the poor naked and badly mutilated prisoner. With a singular wisdom he beckoned the oldest Indian to rise and tell him the truth. Indians, as the patriarchs of old, always have great reverence for age.

The old Indian dropped his blanket from his shoulders and pointing to all the Indians except the three at his side, one after another, said, "Cock-kusee! Cock-kusee! Cock-kusee! Drunk, drunk, drunk."

At this papa slowly and sadly shook his head, looking first at the nearest Indian a long time and so on to the rest. Then he beckoned the first to take the rich red silk shawl which he had muffled about his neck and put it about the pitiful wretch in the middle of the group. He had been kept standing all the time with his shaggy and battered head held low on his breast. The Indian, respecting this as his part of the sentence, rose on his feet at once and not only handed over the gaudy bit of garment, but helped the poor prisoner to put it on. Then he beckoned the next one to put one of his extra blankets on his shoulders. Indians in those days generally wore all they had to wear. Wearing three shirts was no unusual thing at the date of this settlement, and they were always of the most gaudy sort and often of the richest silk. Such clothing was purchased with money paid for their land.

By this time the other Indians caught up the idea that they too must pay the penalty, and one after the other took off something and put it on the naked man till he was clothed better than the best. Then the old "sober Indian" took a rich red handkerchief from about his neck and tied it about his head, pushing back the blood-matted hair that hung down over his face, and poking him gently in the stomach with his fist, made him stand up straight and look

him in the face. The name of this old Indian was Shingle-Ma-See.

Another "sober Indian," Jim-Sas-See-Grass, a mighty hunter, gave him a pair of red flannel leggins. This revealed another pair of leggins, frilled buckskin, underneath the red ones. But with all this wealth and new dignity the mutilated little man seemed not quite satisfied, and another "sober Indian" handed over an extra old blanket.

Then one Indian after another kept handing over things till the mean little prisoner was almost smothered with clothes. He was revealing the very trait no doubt that had made him despised. The climax came when he made sign that he must have a horse to ride. There was no spare pony and no true Indian of this tribe would be seen on foot.

Who this despised Indian was no one can say at this distance of years, but from my experience I should say he had come to the tribe of Miami as a traveler or, more properly, a tramp. Indians are, or were, great travelers. They were always welcome, no matter wherefrom or when, war or peace. For, as there were no fortifications to betray or expose, they were never treated as spies or suspected of evil designs.

They paid their way by describing strange lands through which they passed, making maps or figures

in the ashes of the camp fires or in little heaps of sand. But there was this difference between the Indian traveler of the old days and the white traveler of the present date—he must always tell the truth. A Marco Polo[17] would have been disgraced and driven out of camp the first hour of his stay, or possibly have lost his scalp on the spot.

A Rocky Mountain Indian of the old days who had descended the river as far as St. Louis and seen a steamboat, tried to tell about it on his return, and described it as big as about ten canoes the first night of his narrative. The next night he spoke of it as being as big as about fifty canoes. The chief stopped him and reminded the tribe, all gathered about on his right to hear the wonderful story, that he had said ten canoes at first. The honest traveler admitted this and tendered his scalp, explaining that he was afraid to say at first how big it really was.

Then he was urged to tell how big, but he loudly protested that he was still afraid, for if they should heap all the canoes to be found in the mountain lakes and rivers together they would not have half enough to make a single steamboat. He was still urged to go on, but when he tried to make the noise of the wheels and the puff and piercing scream of the monster, he nearly took the roof off the council house, and it seemed was going to kill himself in

his honest effort, when the chief thought him a maniac and made him get out.

This dismal little dusky man who stood before his judge, with the tribe squatted about, was possibly a Ute or Blackfoot; anyway, he was from some barren and blowy land. For the people as well as the trees grow close to the ground in bleak and windy countries, and they are low and dark in mind and body, as well as in stature.

Papa hesitated a long time before deciding what to do with this mass of silk and wool, old clothes and new, and then at last he beckoned the last donor to take back his gift, then another, then another, then another till the beggar had only meagre raiment and an extra blanket.

Then he slowly rose up, closed his hands, bowed slowly three times to old Shingle-Ma-See, and sat down. The trial had concluded. Then the sober Indians came forward, one at a time, and reaching the right hand, said heartily: "How! How! Shake! Shake!"

Then the other Indians, all sober now, or nearly so, came up and did the same. Then the mean little dark man reached his hand, but papa did not notice it, only motioning Shingle-Ma-See to lead off. Then he made sign by closing his eyes with his head aside that the dismal man must stay with him,

and stay for three moons, till well and strong. At this all the Indians were glad and excited with delight—that is, as much excited as an Indian ever allows himself to be—and again coming forward, shouted: "How! How!" and shaking hands heartily they made their way over the low place in the fence, untied their ponies, and, following their old chief in long, single file, were soon lost in the dense woods on their way home.

Our savage soon washed his face, we all sat down to dinner together, and when he had hastily eaten, got my brother's tomahawk and went for wood. He slept by the fireplace in his blanket and kept the cabin warm all night.

"My," said mother next morning as we sat together at breakfast and talked of the magistrate's first "trial." "My, but I did want that red silk shawl they tied about his legs. What became of it? I didn't see it again."

The Indian must have understood. For that day he went down to the branch, washed and dried the big bright shawl and when mother was out cutting brush he spread it over the foot of the bed. And it was cheerful!

Papa said, "Why, Margaret!"

"Hulings Miller," she replied, "you are a magistrate, the judge of all this country, and here you

put in nearly the whole day deciding between these Indians and never got a cent, did you?"

"Why, Margaret, I never thought of that," he said. "I guess you have a right to the shawl if you want it."

I think the Indian understood and was glad, for he got wood right along all winter and cut and burned more brush than any white man could have done. But in the spring when the sap began to run he ran with it and we never saw him any more. He was still an Indian!

There was talk all the time of the land coming into market. Plenty of adventurers who had been too late to get locations, were waiting to pounce on that of those unfortunate enough not to have money in hand to purchase. Papa had no money now, but he worked hard, night and day, you may say, all winter, and with the help of a neighbor had made a loom, a big spinning wheel and a little wheel for mother; the big wheel for wool, and the little foot wheel for flax. When the frost was out of the ground he plowed the little field and put in corn and flax; mother and we lads made the garden.

A man by the name of Lorenzo Jacobs began to build a mill on our side of the Massassinewa, "the beautiful river," about a mile off, and there papa got work at 50 cents a day, boarding at home, but having

his dinner with the mill hands. He was paid every Saturday night.

Mother, the first Saturday night, got an old mitten she had knit for him when we were making sugar, and sewed up the holes and put the three silver dollars in it, saying as she shook it down, "Nest egg to buy the land."

Each head of a family could locate one hundred sixty acres of land. The price was $1.25 an acre. But the land laws were primitive [18] and pretty severe in these early days and you must not only have the money in hand at the time the land came into market, but you must have two reliable witnesses to "prove up"—that is, to prove that you had built a house and made a home in it for more than a year. As there was a feeling against greased paper for windows, you were required to prove that you had glass in the windows.

When papa stopped working at the mill, after about four months, he went to Marion, the county seat of our Grant County, and got some panes of glass. At the same time he got two little dry goods boxes and from one of these whittled out a sash. One day a good-natured old neighbor from Tennessee, by the name of Billy Fields, seeing papa whittling away at his sash, said:

"All nonsense, Squire, all a waste of time."

"But the law says we must have glass in the windows," replied papa.

"Well, what's the matter with setting an old bottle or two in your window?" he said. "There are plenty of men to swear you have got glass in your window."

The last winter had been a hard one and packs of big gray wolves had crossed the ice and come down from the north into our neighborhood. As the Indians did not hunt much any more, having plenty of money, the wolves became bold, and even dangerous. One night as papa was coming home they got after him. We boys, who had gone to meet him as usual, heard him calling for mother, and we took up the cry of terror. Mother came almost at once with a big hickory bark torch, held high as she ran, and the wolves shrank back. But poor papa was sadly broken and was ill for a long time.

He was well enough pretty soon, however, to pull and cure the flax and help pick and comb the wool for mother to card into rolls and spin for her loom. The wool in those days was awful. Burs and beggar lice stuck to the sheep that ran in the woods at will, till they were almost black. And this had to be picked out by hand. But we little fellows, all three, could pick wool now. And this we did by the light of the wood fire, where one little head after another nodded and nodded till it could hold up no longer,

but sank to rest on the wool. Then some one would pick up the little sleeper and lay him gently away in the trundle bed.[19] For we no longer slept in the big bed with our parents.

The flax[20] was not so troublesome, nor did we have to plant it, and plough it, and hoe it, as we did corn. We had to pull it in due season, shake the earth from the roots and lay it in a swath in the sun and rain till the pith or stalk became brittle and shrunk loose from the fibre. Then we must break it in the flax brake, a handful at a time. Then we must hackle it on an iron hackle, so as to get the pith all out. Then we must comb and curry it till it was ready for the distaff of the little spinning wheel. Mother had to have flax to make warp for the woof of her bolt of cloth to be made on the loom; then to be marketed at Marion, the only town then within many a mile.

Papa sold all the increase of the sheep and the two calves to the Indians and got some money for mother's "nest egg" that way and mother raised many chickens and disposed of them to the tribe. Once, when we two boys went with papa, we took too much care of the poor hens, as the day was cold and raw, and smothered three of them. Papa did not count them, so the promised four dozen fell short. But the Indians counted the dead ones all the

same, and paid for them. Still, for all that could be done, it seemed almost impossible to get all the money together for the land.

In this dilemma papa got a good old Irishman, who had a big family of boys, to take sixty acres and pay him $50 for the privilege. This left us only one hundred acres; but then it left only $75 more to raise, and with what we had in hand, selling the pigs and mother's big bolt of cloth and so on, the money was all secured and he set out for Fort Wayne, the land office, with Billy Fields and Lorenzo Jacobs, who also had to "prove up," as witnesses, and so the land at last was secured.

Soon after this a big raw-boned man in a beaver hat, with a hatchet face, came to us by the way of the big State road not far away, with a load of clocks [21] in a carriage. He had a big impertinent boy with him, and he pleaded sadly that both he and his boy were sick.

Mother was very good to them; pulled out the trundle bed to the middle of the floor, had us children get back in the foot of the bed as before, and treated them as if they had been her own blood.

But they both wailed and moaned bitterly, and begged papa to take the clocks, and at his leisure dispose of them to his neighbors. There was a whole carriage load of them, but in the double and

treble assurance that he could double or treble his money on them, my confiding papa, not knowing one thing about the real price or value of such wares, signed a note and once more became a "merchant."

Let me get rid of that hatchet-faced wretch right here, for, un-Christian as it is, I hate him yet. He came at the end of the year, exacting his money with enormous interest, although papa had not sold a single one of the old clocks. Jacobs came forward and took up the note generously, and tore it up, for mother was crying; but we were in debt again, and papa had to struggle on and teach and toil as before to make up what he had lost.

When we set out to cross the plains years later these old clocks, still on hand, all save a single one, took up more than half the wagon bed. We hauled them almost to the top of the Rocky Mountains, and then one night in a terrific snowstorm, when the wagon upset and we needed the old clocks for kindling wood, they were, brass, glass and varnish, all cremated. Peace to their sounding brass; rest to their brazen faces!

But to get back among the Indians of Indiana; papa had brought two little dry goods boxes from Marion. One he had made into two window sashes. We boys kept wondering what he was going to do with the other. He kept it in the smoke house, and

once when we found him in there all alone, when he thought we were down at the creek catching crawfish, we found him busy in there fixing rockers on the little box. We were delighted with the idea, and asking him what it was for, he timidly and with some confusion, said it was to be a cradle for little Jimmy.

But little Jimmy thrust both his hands in his pants pockets and said it was not big enough, and he added, with a pout, that baby Jimmy did not want to sleep in a cradle anyhow.

A few days before this little rebellion by the baby boy in his first pantaloons, an honest man and a pretty young girl, really the prettiest woman I had ever seen except mother, had come to papa to be married, and, as usual, where money was so scarce, brought two coon skins. And they were very fine skins, killed in the heart of winter and dressed to perfection.

To dress or tan a coon skin properly you first parflesh it with the back edge of your hunting-knife, then take the brains of the animal and, rubbing them on the flesh side, you manipulate the skin with your hands industriously, rubbing and rubbing for hours. This is, or was done, in those days at night by the cabin fire, after the day's work was done. It takes three operations to complete the task. But when it

is done the skin shines and glistens as if oiled; and each particular bit of fur stands up as if alive. Not many coon skins are dressed in this way.

Mother had claimed these two beautiful skins for some special purpose of her own and put them away under her pillow, where she always kept the money, when there was any money, and she now brought out the beautiful skins, which Jimmy had also admired very much and she put them carefully and tenderly in the cradle, smoothing them down with her hands and talking gently baby talk to baby Jimmy. But he again thrust his hands deep in his pockets and turning as if in disgust, stalked away to the door and went out. No cradle for Jimmy Miller. So mother took the coon skins out, for the time at least, and the cradle was put back in the smoke house.

Soon after a good old Southern woman came from the Billy Fields settlement and sent us little folks away to Billy Fields and his house full of girls. And when the good old woman went away we were all back home and very, very happy. I led the horse that carried her and she sat astraddle, smoking a cob pipe and holding tightly before her one of those clocks, the first and only one we ever disposed of. But let me tell you the end of this chapter in verse. For there are things that are sacred from severe prose

and a song suits better the theme. This is from *Harper's Magazine:*

WHEN LITTLE SISTER CAME

We dwelt in the woods of the Tippecanoe,
In a lone, lost cabin, with never a view
Of the full day's sun for a whole year through.
With strange half hints through the russet corn
We three were hurried one night. Next morn
There was frost on the trees, and a sprinkle of snow
And tracks on the ground. We burst through the door,
And a girl baby cried—and then we were four.
We were not sturdy, and we were not wise,
In the things of the world, and the ways men dare;
A pale-browed mother with a prophet's eyes
A father that dreamed and looked anywhere
Three brothers—wild blossoms, tall fashioned as men
And we mingled with none, but we lived as when
The pair first lived, ere they knew the fall;
And loving all things we believed in all.

CHAPTER III

FREMONT AND MY FIRST SHOES

One day papa, who always read to us spare times on Sunday and at night when there was no wool to pick, brought home a book from the Indian village which had been loaned to him by the agent, and began to read to us the explorations of Captain Fremont.[22]

I never was so fascinated. I never grew so fast in my life. Every scene and circumstance in the narrative was painted on my mind to last, and to last forever. Papa saw my intense interest in the story and would stop and explain to the three children at his knee and to mother, who sat busily knitting on the other side of the big bright fireplace, all the names and new things in the book, till the story glowed like the great log fire by which it was read. I liked the bit where Lieutenant Lee—afterward the famous Confederate General Lee—generously gave Fremont a little cannon, although against orders, for his three-thousand mile expedition.

I fancied I could see Fremont's men hauling the cannon up the savage battlements of the Rocky

Mountains, flags in the air, Fremont at the head, waving his sword, his horse neighing wildly in the mountain wind, with unknown and unnamed empires on every hand. It touched my heart when he told me how a weary little brown bee tried to make its way from a valley of flowers far below across a spur of snow, where he sat resting for a moment with his men; how the bee rested on his knee till it was strong enough to go on to another field of flowers beyond the snow; and how he waited a bit for it to go at its will.

I was no longer a boy, in truth, I had never been a boy, like other boys, had never had a ball, marble, top or toy of any sort, but now I began to be inflamed with a love for action, adventure, glory and great deeds away out yonder under the path of the setting sun. Mother, too, took in something of the same enthusiasm and once stopped papa to ask what we, the United States, would do with all this land; but he, with his continual sense of justice, quietly answered that the land belonged to the Indians.

When the frosts began to whiten the fences and the yellow leaves to fall in banks of gold, as if to pay Mother Earth in the richest currency that ever circulated for all the generosity of the passing year, when baby snows sifted down and made noiseless and velvet ways to walk upon, Billy Fields, the shoe-

maker of the settlement, came to us with a corn cob pipe in his teeth and a flat little board under his arm. I was to be measured for my first pair of shoes!

I had never, as yet, been a robust boy, as my brothers were. I had never, as yet, been able to eat meat. Mother had always contrived to provide me with a bowl of milk, and this with a spoon and a big piece of corn bread, eaten alone in a fence corner or under a tree, wherever I could get away by myself, was my chief and highest relish. And so it was that I was to have the first pair of shoes of the three little boys.

Papa had carried me on his back to the school in the sugar camp country, but now little Jimmy must be carried to school. My sedate black-haired and manly big brother, John D.—all the Witts, or the DeWitts, had a "D" in the family as a substitute for the De, which had been rubbed off, as being too foreign, like the date and name of an old English shilling—cheerfully deferred to me because I was not so strong and was the first to insist that I, instead of himself, as was his right, should have the first pair of shoes; he would gladly continue to wear moccasins or go barefoot.

This winter papa had a new school, away over on Pipe Creek. We three boys all went to this school

WE THREE BOYS ALL WENT TO SCHOOL . . . JIMMY ON PAPA'S BACK.

from the very first day, I in my new shoes, and they hurt like sixty; John D. in moccasins of undressed deer skin, the hairy side out, and Jimmy on papa's back. We crossed a great bridge of many spans, the first I had ever seen, a marvel of tremendous construction to me and a torment every time I passed over it in my hard and heavy new shoes.

We had a big hewed log school house with a big fireplace at either end, for the puncheon-floored room was full of girls and boys, big and little, white, brown, and black.

And papa had better, even big, pay here, for the first inflowing tide of civilization had touched us at last, and the motley and packed school was paid for, in part at least, by either the State or County, I do not know which. It was all one to me at the time. I was only concerned that papa had good pay so that we might get on and out the way Fremont had explored. It was a noisy but happy school; and I was as happy as the happiest.

That crowded school was a continual source of instruction and delight to me. The big boys and big girls would stand up and read paragraph after paragraph, each one with face intently to the same book, while they alternately read aloud, and I followed all with intense attention, and learned by heart much of the second and third readers before

I had yet had either of them in my possession.

And then there was the spelling class! Oh, that spelling class, when everyone big enough to stand in line left the book on the long wooden bench and took the last lesson of the day. But while very intent and industrious I never could learn to spell, except in the "simplified" way; although John D., only half as tall as some of the big boys, often stood at the head of that long and turbulent class. Friday afternoon we always gave over to spelling. Papa would appoint the leaders and they would "choose up"—that is, they would take the broom, toss it up, catching hold low down on the handle, and then hand-over-hand they would each lay hold, and the last one to hold the broom handle had first choice. With what exultation I often saw little brother John D. chosen first of all!

These leaders would so arrange the long benches that they sat on either side of the house at the head of their following, each one taking such as were chosen till the last of the school, even to little Jimmy, who was learning his A, B, C's, was chosen to sit in line. Then papa would stand in the middle with his back to a fireplace and "pronounce." All was life, subdued laughter and merry banter and challenge at these "Friday spellin's," and many funny things happened. Titter was almost continual.

Sometimes the laugh turned on papa. The little ones, as said before, were also chosen. I cannot see that this was to help them spell or learn anything. But they were made to believe that it was a great favor and a grave dignity conferred on them. The A, B, C fell to the lot of the last and least of the tots. This took some time, of course, but the longer it lasted the better the big children liked it. For papa's back had to be turned while he tried to teach the little ones. And at such times the big ones made eyes, innocent signs of undying love, and often nearly exploded with laughter.

Little Jimmy, like myself, was dull and indifferent, even impatient with the discipline of books, and learned his alphabet tardily. Once it came his turn to pronounce the letter "G" in its order from A to Z, but he could not or would not think of it. At last papa, out of patience, said sharply: "Well, Jimmy, what do I say to the horse when he does not go right in the field? Say what I say to the horse!"

Then Jimmy in his sharp, piping voice, answered quickly and sharply: "You say, 'Did up, dod on you!' "

The explosion in the rear was terrible. Papa was red in the face, but turning about looked good-naturedly at the roaring rows of big boys and said: "Boys and girls, please be good. Listen to me. I promised you a big barrel of red apples at Christmas.

But I have been thinking lately, as the school is so big and you all have been so good and so kind and so studious that you shall have two big barrels of red apples! School is dismissed."

Soon after Christmas a young man brought a bright, rosy-faced girl to get married. You needed no license in those days, or anything else to speak of, except the girl, to get married. When they had been made man and wife, with mother and Russell Fields for witnesses, the young man blushed and fumbled in his pockets and finally said: "I left my money in the other pants, squire."

The pretty girl looked her young husband hard in the face, then burst into tears. Mother took her out to the smokehouse to show her a setting hen and talk her away from her tears. Then the man said: "Squire, I have renigged. I renigged because I had no trump, lied because I could not tell the truth. I have nothing in the world but my ax, but I know how to use it and will work it out."

"Go get your ax! Leave your wife here to help mother take care of the baby; you better go to school with me. You can chop mornings and evenings and Saturdays. If you are good, we will see what can be done in the spring."

The young couple were very grateful. The young husband went to school and worked hard. Mother

fixed up the smokehouse for them with the bed the beastly old clock peddler and his boy had used, and they were both as good as could be. Jacobs gave them both work in the spring and they turned out to be first-class people.

Papa taught a spring term also this time for he wanted the money to go to Oregon. There was but one idea in our happy little household and that idea was Oregon. Senator Linn of Missouri, colleague with the great Benton, whose daughter Jessie, Captain Fremont had married on his return, had introduced a bill giving each settler with a family a full section of land in that far off and most fertile spot in the world and—well, just think of it! Six hundred and forty acres ready for the plow, and only for measuring it off!

Why, how hard and long we had worked to get a single one hundred acres, and all of it brush and mud and malaria!

Who would not want to go to Oregon?

Besides that General Joe Lane, who had gone to school to papa in the sugar camps and then to Congress, then to the Mexican War, had been appointed governor of Oregon. All things seemed to point in our favor and to Oregon!

Papa set about to sell the few sheep, the land—everything we did not need—to go to Oregon, and

the table was spread with many maps, and Fremont's travels were read and reread continually by the tallow dip till the night oftentime was far spent. But the winter had been a hard one; and all the sheep were out in the woods. One night they did not come up as usual, and we found them next morning all dead, their throats cut, as if some dogs or wild beasts had killed them, only to suck their blood.

The kind and sympathetic Indian agent came over on hearing of this and told papa he believed that the dogs of the Indians, very numerous and of predatory habits, had killed his sheep. But papa insisted it was the big gray wolves that he had encountered the year or so before. For how could the dogs get across the river? But the agent, hearing what papa had asked for his sheep, went back and laid the case before Shingle-Ma-See and promptly he came over with the cash. Papa at first refused to take it. Then he consented to take half of it. The good old savage laughed at him, called him a foolish little squaw, and then went and counted all the money to mother.

Let me digress to tell you of this man who gave us the first idea of Oregon, and stood by us so finely. His name was McCullough. He became famous for his many generous deeds, grew very rich, with banks even in Europe, and was made a Cabinet minister under President Grant—Secretary of the Treasury.

When I found him in London, long, long years after, and told him how papa reverenced him and talked over the old friends, red and white, he was very, very glad and made me promise that if I ever needed money to be sure and let him know. But I never saw him any more, and have set down this paragraph only to show that there are or were, not only good Indians, but good agents also.

The farm was sold to a German family, lately landed, for a good round sum; mother, as usual, taking care of the money, only now, although there were many many pieces of gold—each piece wrapped up carefully by itself in tissue paper—it took two old mittens to hold it all. We pushed out with but one span of horses toward Chicago, intending to winter there and equip other teams at that point, and possibly dispose of those old clocks; for the false mahogany was peeling off and they had begun to look very shabby.

At Rochester, a town near Tippecanoe River, we heard a tale of butchery that made the blood stand still. The intrepid teacher and missionary, Dr. Marcus P. Whitman, his wife and all his little colony had been butchered by Indians, led by Canada Joe, a cruel and foolish half-breed.

The British had been claiming Oregon and this fearless missionary, Whitman, had in midwinter

mounted his horse, and clad in buckskin and all alone most of the way, reached Washington and declared to Congress that the one and only peaceable and certain way to hold Oregon was to send there a train of a thousand wagons filled with settlers.

He was encouraged, led a long train, the first across the plains from the Mississippi to Walla Walla on the Columbia, and was going ahead finely with his vast enterprise, when the Indians suddenly rose up, killed him and his brave young wife with all their house, except one little girl, who got away, was helped along with a few others by good Indians further down the river and finally got to Oregon City. It is a long story, but not quite out of line with this family tale; for this little girl grew up, was married, had a little girl who grew to womanhood and then became the wife of our little yellow-headed Jimmy, who had refused to sleep in the new, coonskin cradle. They have nine beautiful children, and their boys are not only boys, but men, manly, and dutiful young men.

CHAPTER IV

PAPA TAKES US TO THE CIRCUS

While awaiting a favorable opportunity to start for Oregon, papa found a place further up the storied Tippecanoe River, about five miles from Rochester, and arranged to teach there the coming winter. But before going there he put us all in the wagon and went down the river near to where it flows into the Wabash, to see the old battle ground, where Harrison had so stubbornly held his own during the bloody night attack by the brother of Tecumseh. He was moved to do this out of respect for his father, who had fought here and who had fallen under the same intrepid soldier on the banks of the Maumee, at old Fort Meigs.

We camped here on the battle ground for many days, and papa led us all around by day and told us all the pitiful story of the pioneers, their hardy and honest lives and unselfish devotion to duty. He took great pride in telling about the Kentucky men with their long flint-lock squirrel guns, for his father had been one of them.

The trees were many and mostly oak on this high

bank, where the struggle had been hardest, and all seemed to be badly scarred. But the scars were not so big and so ugly from the bullets as from the tomahawks of hunters, and perhaps Indians also, hacking into the trees to find old bullets of the battle to melt over and mold again into bullets. It was autumn and the trees were red, so very richly red, as if the woods had been enriched by the blood shed there, as if the leaves had taken on a deeper hue from the blood of the great forgotten dead.

Going from the battle ground up the river to the little farm of eighty acres, which papa had bought, we found two fairly good cabins and all the ground fenced. The man who sold it was to remain in the older cabin while we took charge of the new one and we at once set out for school. Some of the neighbors were Yankees, some German emigrants, but some of them were "poor white trash" from down South, dreadfully given to drinking and fist fighting. These fist fights were mostly on muster days, at log rollings, or house raisings, where all the neighborhood, good and bad, met together and whiskey seemed to be almost the only sort of provisions.

The school house was a most humble affair of unhewn logs, a mile away through deep woods, and greatly over crowded.

Papa got on well with the scholars, big and little,

and soon found two good big boys who were anxious to work for their board nights and mornings and Saturdays and go to school at the same time—quite a custom in these early days. And it may as well be noted here as elsewhere that this sort of student as a rule made up the Lincolns, Garfields, and Lanes of the great Middle West.

Papa was making every preparation possible for a big crop of corn. For the first time in the history of the West there was to be a way to reach points of transportation to the East. The southern end of Indiana had always had an outlet by way of the rivers away down to New Orleans, but now a canal [28] had at last been cut making some sort of connection by way of the lakes with New York, where there was a stable market.

And a plank road (toll) had been made from Rochester, only a few miles from us, to the city of Logansport, on the canal, where a certain price, fabulously low of course, was established for all the corn that could reach this point. We must take advantage of this first market in the country, and so kept hard at work, all of us except the little baby girl, who was still in Jimmy's cradle, from daybreak till dusk made it impossible to toil later.

When school was ended, the two young men still stayed with us, mother not at all complaining of the

extra work, but up every morning long before dawn preparing fragrant breakfasts of ham and eggs and fried chicken, all by the light of her dim tallow dip.

One pretty spring morning when the boys were plowing, a tall dark man in buckskins came where papa and I were splitting rails, and setting the butt of his long rifle heavily on the ground and throwing his big right fist away toward the west with a sweep, shouted out, "Gold! Gold! Gold! Squire, they have found gold by the wagon load in California; by the cart load, by gum! The ground is full of gold in Californy, an' I'm goin' to Californy!"

He hastened on to where the boys were plowing and followed them up in the furrow, talking and gesticulating wildly as he went. At dinner we could talk, think, eat, nothing but "Californy."

Yes, the young men would go with us. We would go to Oregon, for the section of land was sacred with us all, but the boys would leave us at the forks of the road and go right on, get loads of gold, then come to us in Oregon, "and let Californy go to the bow-wows!"

That night Fremont's maps were gone over again, more carefully than ever; all the maps were out on the table, and tallow dips[24] were burned to the socket before even little yellow and frouzy headed Jimmy began to nod his manly little head!

We would set out next March, a good month, a name with a good meaning, for three thousand miles of marching by mountain and plain, wood and water, desert and dust, and we went to bed literally filled with glittering "Californy."

Ten months more and we must be on our way. And how the work went on. Corn was planted, hoed, hilled up and plowed deep! How beautifully and healthy and proudly it waved its lifted sabres in the sun, a sea of glistening emerald!

About midsummer Washington Harrison Peterson, a tall Kentucky boy who had been at school, came to see us and brought a big and wondrous poster of pictures which he had found on the door of the now vacant school house. There were elephants, snakes, monkeys, men standing on their heads, and bearded women swallowing big long butcher knives. There was going to be a circus in Rochester!

Papa and mother talked it over that night, while Washington Harrison Peterson, who had seen a circus, or said he had, dilated on the notable beauty of the bearded woman, the wondrous celerity of the elephant, and the beautiful and alert boa constrictor as it ate apples ravenously out of a naked man's hand in the Garden of Eden, and it was unanimously agreed, all the three boys voting in the

affirmative, that papa and his lads should go to that astounding circus.

Yes, papa would take Washington Harrison Peterson along as a reward for his pointing out so perfectly and entertainingly the moral, ethical and educational advantages of the coming circus. We would take a wagon load of water melons along, sell them on the streets, get money to buy the tickets, and so be none the poorer but vastly wiser for the day's work and delight.

I remember papa saying to mother as he covered up the fire for the night: "Yes, Margaret, I think it is better that the boys should see the circus; for, of course, they will never have a circus in Oregon or California, and this will be something they ought to see here while they can. It will be a sort of education for them, and they will remember it all their lives."

The days, the great big hot and dry midsummer days, busy as they were, every one dragged by slowly, but at last the great circus day came. With the wagon bed nearly full of melons and papa and his boys in one seat, we set out for Rochester. All the neighbors of all the country round about were going our way. Jimmy remarked with a business whisper that none of the wagons but our own had water melons.

"I hope you won't try to be a merchant, Jimmy; get up there, Sorrel," said papa.

The dread of papa's life was that we boys should try to be merchants. When we came to the big State road, on the bank of the river a mile or so from town, we found quite a multitude waiting there to see if the circus would go over the high bridge or ford the stream. As the band at the head came on it struck up a lively air and led through the water. The circus followed, not daring to risk the elephants, the wonderfully painted wagons and the beautifully bearded lady on the shaky wooden bridge. Papa pushed on soon after alongside of the elephants that took to the water with a roar. The big and noisy beasts stopped in the middle of the deep stream and began to suck in and spurt water all over their backs and sides and saucily throw little streams of it over all who were near them. This made everybody shout and roar, and the elephants seemed to enjoy it to the full. Jimmy said he could see them laugh. But Jimmy always had a good and lively imagination.

At last the big elephant with a man on its neck tried to lay down and the man with an iron hook had to prod and shout and yell desperately before he could make it stand up and move on. Then the band struck up loud and shrill, and the wonderful

THE ELEPHANTS STOPPED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREAM AND BEGAN TO SPURT WATER.

caravan, half a mile long it seemed to me, moved on to the music of the stirring drums and horns and pipes till we entered the city of Rochester, where the thousands of boys shouted their wonder, admiration, and exultation. I even saw some of them turn hand springs and try to stand on their heads.

We boys had painted some signs on boards with red poke berries, reading, "Ripe melons, melons fip and a bit! Melons six pence apiece." That is melons a five-penny bit. Melons a half shilling or six pennies. Melons a picayune[25] or melons, a little one. This last to suit the Southerner. We took out the tail board of the wagon and handed out melons as fast as they were wanted, and that was about as fast as we could hand them out. Papa went down town and on coming back in a brief time he looked on and said: "Going like hot cakes, eh? How much money have you made? Enough for us all five to go in?"

"Yes, and more, too, papa. Just count it up."

And so he took the money, counted it up and said, "Good! Now, give away all the rest and let's go!"

He again seemed even more dreadfully afraid we might want to be merchants, and unhooking the horses he brought them around to the tail of the wagon, emptied out a dozen ears of yellow

corn, and taking off the bridles left them to eat while we were away like birds for the big tent.

What a whirl! What a rush and roar! The shrill music, melody surely, over and above all the clamor! And how the tumblers tumbled, the spotted horses circled and the painted clown kept the center, and the impressive ringmaster cracked his whip savagely around and over all things.

I had never dreamed that there was anything waiting along the road of my coming years so grand and so all glorious as this! How we did talk to mother and sister that night!

I nearly broke my neck the very next day after we got home trying to ride the old plow horse, head down, and had to go to bed for a week. But that did not dull my enthusiasm. I talked circus right along, so did John D., so did Jimmy, for days and days, till at last papa gently protested, said that mother and baby sister already had heard it all over a dozen times and that we must now take up our reading again and get ready for the wonderful things we were to see on the way to Oregon.

May I take time to stick a pin here and assert with my hand on my heart that that circus was really great. At least, it has ever stood out and up and over all things in my mind as the most splendid thing ever seen, until we set out for Oregon. I

have had many chances in my busy life to attend other circuses, both in the old world and in the new, but I have never yet been willing to mar the memories of that first one by trying to see a second. And I want to leave this idea with you. Let your boy go to a circus—just one good circus—and then stop for all time. The clock strikes 12 only once a day. When the two hands are pointing heavenward together and you have seen the greatest and the best, be contented, for the sun is setting to the west from that moment. I am glad as I can be that I saw that circus by the Wabash waters, but most particularly glad that I never tried to see another.

When the emerald seas of corn grew golden under the first frosts, the young men, papa, mother, and we three little boys, baby sitting in the wagon, husked out the big yellow ears and carried load after load to the cribs till the generous harvest was all gathered; a tremendous crop! Then the two young men, on the second day, "came down with the ague"; then papa, and then mother.

Do you know what it is to shake and to shiver, and to burn up with fever and cry aloud for water, and not be able to drink when it is brought to you? Can you imagine how terrible you feel when you are shivering and freezing to the bone, and are

only the more fearfully chilled as you sit by the fire or in the sun? That is the Indiana ague, the miserable fever and ague as it was in the old days by the waters of the Wabash.

Earth resents familiarity. We had turned up too much fresh and fever-laden[26] soil. Besides, we—at least our parents and the two young men—had toiled too hard.

With all of them down on their backs, John D. and I loaded the wagon and drove away on over the plank road to Logansport. The wagonbed was so big and we were so small that, in coming home, we had to stand up all the way, so as to look ahead and see the horses. But we got home, and, oh, the glory of laying the big silver dollars in mother's hand, and of hearing poor, shivering papa count them and clink them over and over, as his teeth chattered and chattered.

They must have spent an anxious two days, for they were worse than ever. But now their blood came back, and with a flow so warm that they soon shook only every other day, and then, at last, only every third day, and then, on our final safe return, not at all.

Jimmy went with us that last time, and as we had to come home very late we were rained on in the dark, and the next day or so we were all three

down flat on our backs, with the burning fever and bone-breaking chills. Jimmy, who had nearly frozen that last night as we bigger boys stood up and he lay asleep on the empty bags, shaking the worst of all three.

However, the young men were up and about soon, and so the team kept going till all the big cribs of corn were empty and the two old mittens were once more full of money, and papa began to buy oxen, cows and wagon for the wondrous journey ahead of us. The cows had to be yoked alongside of the oxen. It would not do to try driving loose stock. We got another wagon, a carriage for mother, and, having sold the farm back to the same man, a Mr. Culver, from whom we had bought it, we were promptly ready for the long march as it had been planned for nearly a year before.

The exact day of our starting, with all the neighbors for miles around to see, was by chance the sacred 17th day of March.[27] I had insisted on having a gun. Papa gave a reluctant consent, but got me an old smooth-bore[28] flintlock, with no flints,[29] till I made one out of an arrowhead. And somehow this would get loose and get lost nearly all the time.

The young men who were with us did not want me to have a gun, and at this remote day with

my better knowledge of the world and the ways of human nature, I think I begin to guess pretty clearly what became of my flints.

It may seem strange that papa so disliked guns, since he had been nearly all his life in the wilderness, and was now pushing away into the very heart of a land of wild beasts and wilder men. But he would not touch a gun. And during all his seventy-two years in the border he never knew how to load a gun. Please do not call him eccentric. I despise the too frequent use of the term eccentric. I should say that as his father had been killed when he was yet a babe at the breast that he somehow sucked in the terror and hate of all violence with his weeping mother's milk, sucked in maybe milk and tears together.

Well, we were off and away now. The Rubicon [30] was behind us.

And have I bothered and wearied you with a story of trifles, details of toil, trials, and baby brothers of men? So let it be. What is writ is writ. But if you do not love, pity, cherish, and revere the memories of these mighty men of these once densely wooded States, Ohio and Indiana, these pawpaw [31] fastnesses, these maple wood empires that gave us mothers in Israel [32] who suckled prophets, sages, soldiers, Presidents—then please follow no further.

But I say to you, that there is nothing in the pages of history so glorious, so entirely grand, as the lives of these noble Spartan fathers and mothers of Americans, who begot and brought forth and bred the splendid giants of the generation that is now fast following the setting sun of their unselfish and all immortal lives.

CHAPTER V

CROSSING THE PLAINS

Yonder in the west lies the East;
Yonder reaches the road to India.

The distance that we traveled, counting the contours of often roundabout ways, was quite, or nearly, three thousand miles. The time was seven months and five days. There were no bridges, no railroad levels, nothing of the sort. We had only the road as nature had made it, and it was often deeply furrowed and rutted by the heavy wagons that had gone before. We proceeded very slowly.

Many times, at night, after ascending a stream to find a ford we could look back and see our smoldering camp fires of the day before.

We found the roads hard frozen on setting out in March from the headwaters of the Wabash and the road good at first. We camped at night with settlers and fed our stock well. We also took care that we should be in the best of strength and heart, as well as the stock.

The camp was usually near some water and in the shelter of the woods. Mother cooked the supper

and made a potful of steaming coffee while the men cared for the horses, and unyoked the cows and oxen and fed them some of the corn and hay that we had brought from home.

Then all sat down in the genial warmth of the fire and feasted on fried eggs and bacon and piping hot corn bread that had been baked over the coals. There was milk for the coffee, and a cupful for baby sister and each of the boys. What appetites we had after the long cold ride in the lumbering wagons!

We young ones fell asleep almost as soon as supper was over,—much as we wanted to keep awake and hear the wonderful stories that would be told by the smoldering camp fire. For several weeks after we started the weather was so cold that we slept in the covered wagons, on mother's soft feather beds.

Lewis and Clark nearly fifty years before had set down the Territories of Illinois and Iowa as all under water and worthless. That was because they had crossed them when the Mississippi and other rivers were in flood. Later information largely dispelled this idea, but still papa was afraid of mud and mire as the spring advanced and kept well off to the left; pointing as direct as the woods and waters would allow for St. Joe [83] on the Missouri as a source of supplies for the long, long journey across the entirely unpeopled plains.

Fortunately we found a steamboat to ferry us across the Mississippi River, or we never should have been able to cross its mighty waters. That was the only ferry that we found to help us cross the many rivers and streams that must be passed. Fortunately most of them were so shallow in places that we could ford them, as others who had gone before had done. After heavy rains we sometimes had to wait for the swollen waters of a river to subside.

We found St. Joe, after nearly two months' steady tramp and solid tread of the honest old oxen, a sea of tents. For miles and miles up the Missouri and down were to be seen the white tents, white covered wagons and busy people passing and surging to and fro.

It was now the middle of May. The weather was warm and we could sleep in the tents instead of the covered wagons. So we rested here for several days while papa purchased food and other things that we needed.

We had two big heavily laden wagons, with eight yoke of oxen to each, a carriage and two horses for mother and baby sister, and a single horse for the three boys to ride. This was particularly convenient, especially at the crossing of swollen streams, when all three could climb on together and get lots of fun and often times a little wetting; for we all

had learned to swim in the dear old Tippecanoe, and we did not mind it a bit if we all rolled off together in the middle of the stream.

Papa had hired two teamsters to come with us and haul corn for the stock, although we now found grass brisket [34] deep and wild flowers to the waist; a perfect sea of flowers yellow and pink and white and purple. So he loaded our wagons with as much corn and as we could carry, sold the rest to other travelers, and sent the teamsters back. This saved us useless expense, and, besides, mother had two less hungry men to feed.

On the 15th of May, 1852, we crossed the Missouri ten miles above St. Joe to avoid the multitude and inevitable mud, and set out into the vast wilderness and the extraordinary march was commenced. The sundown seas were before us, civilization, such as we had known, and all sorts, lay behind us. There could be for us, no turning back. We were not of that material.

Here and there we saw Indians along our route, but only once or twice did they attack us. Most of them were very decent, tall, fine fellows; they stood by or sat their ponies in line and marveled at the continuous stream of people—the innumerable multitude. How feeble and indifferent was our Government fifty or sixty years ago! No sort of

assistance or suggestion or information of any sort to this tumultuous mass of world builders. No statistics. No attempt to enumerate them. Why, they were civilized in Egypt in the days of Exodus. Moses would have made a much better President than the ones we had then, in the early fifties.

The proud and erect Indian men would refuse all presents, but the Indian women, with their babes at their backs refused nothing, although they did not beg at all as they do now. They were very fond of the white children and all the time wanted to touch and fondle them. Mother seemed afraid they would steal her little girl. She, in her eagerness to learn about the land we were about to traverse, had read a yellow book telling all about how Indians would steal little girls! The Indian women were all the time trying to lay their hands on my little brother Jimmy's great shock of frouzy yellow hair, but he would run away from them and hide under the wagons.

We began to meet people in wagons, but thought they were helpers who had gone on with corn for the stock. However, soon we began to come upon new-made graves by the streams and at camping places. Then the graves were many. The cholera had broken out and hundreds were dying and thousands turning back!

I remember reading years after a pretty little sentimental tale about how that when an engineer of the first Pacific railroad on suddenly discovering a grave in the long grass before him tenderly turned aside and changed the course of the track out of respect for this pioneer who fell in the conquest of the West. No such folly. No such sentimental nonsense ever entered the head of any real railroad man. The cold fact is the new-made graves of that sad and desperate cholera year, 1852, far outnumbered the railroad ties of that first railroad.

In the midst of all this turning back, this despair and death, our parents kept steadily on, making slow marches, keeping in good heart, and as a consequence in good health. Papa would stop on Sundays and hold, in a very quiet way, some sort of services. Sometimes a preacher would come into what came to be known as the "Sunday tent," but papa did not like long sermons, and rarely asked anyone to preach lest he might preach too long, as preachers were apt to do.

One night on the Platte River a cyclone came and took the tent from over our heads, and had papa and the men not hastened to tie the three vehicles together with big ox chains they would have gone with the tent. Then the rain fell in torrents, and we all got under the wagons. We had

driven the cattle out onto a wooded island in the river and had no fear for them.

But soon there was a shout, and then a cry of despair from the deep ravine near us. The flood was sweeping the tents, wagons, women, and children all before it. When morning came there was not a vestige of life left, only a few overturned wagons half hidden in the sand. Even the oxen were gone. I heard men tell that on the other side of the Platte River a big train, that had camped in a ravine, had been utterly crushed by a mass of maddened buffalos during that tornado. But I did not see this. Besides it is too terrible to tell in detail.

As we neared the summit of the Rocky Mountains another sudden cyclone struck us, but this was in open day and not so terrible. We had camped on a rocky ridge and had only then gotten the cattle down to water and grass when the cyclone took us in a whirl! Papa and the men got the carriage chained to the big wagon in time, but the lighter wagon, with its load of Connecticut clocks, went over the cliff with a crash. We all held on to the wheels of the big wagon and the wind went, sudden as it came, taking only our last tent and nearly every hat.

The next camp was in the South Pass, so named by Fremont, who had set up a cairn [35] of stones

here: the summit of the Rocky Mountains. The flying snow fell in our faces as we looked away toward the west. The waters were flowing toward the setting sun. It seemed to us all, weary as we were, that the rest of the way must be down hill to the vast ocean. Our camp was by the Pacific Springs. We were now drinking of the waters that flowed to the mighty ocean! What exultation! What glory and achievement!

At Salt Lake, a beautiful city and the scene of honest industry, we rested long, sold some worn-out cattle, the carriage and the two horses; keeping one for mother and baby. We three little fellows had learned to walk well; and walk we did now all the time; all but Jimmy, who had to sleep some each day in the wagon. We, joined with others, built a raft of dead cottonwood [86] logs and crossed cold, swift, Green River [87] on a raft.

The night before descending the steep to this river we were camped in the Subletts cut-off, from which place the mountain scene is one of the most splendid in all the Rocky Mountains, east or west.

As we were about to move a wild band of mounted Indians, that I have since learned were outlaws or robbers, circled about us, and were fired upon by those who had joined papa for the purpose of building the raft. Their chief, a splendid war-

rior in long black hair and gaudy dress, fell from his saddle. A little battle followed. I got behind a wagon with my gun, and drew bead upon the nearest Indian, but as usual found there was no flint in the lock of my gun. The boys afterward said that while I had no flint I had plenty of sand;[38] that even the barrel of my gun was full of it.

Our side as well as the Indians suffered. All were buried in one grave, and we continued on. We had no water at all now. For this cut-off is through a desert. Our course was sharp to the right, close under the Fremont Mountains, after crossing the turbulent and beautiful river, where one of our party, who had been to California, picked up bits of gold in the sand.

It has all been mined since—and we soon made the head waters of the Sho-sho-nee River. It is now called the Snake River. This Indian name means "snake in the grass." There was an old fort, Fort Hall. The cholera was bad here. Men, women, and children dying from drinking the cold, clear waters of the springs that bubbled up from the melting snows of the shining Fremont Mountains.

The days flitted on and we were out of the desert, but not out of trouble.

About this time a very serious thing happened. A Mr. Wagoner had a beautiful girl in his large

family, and a friendly Indian chief who rode a fine spotted horse asked Mr. Wagoner what he would take for her. The Indian was told in jest that he would take ten beautiful spotted horses, like the one he rode.

The Indian dashed off and the same day overtook us with the ten horses and a horde of warriors, and wanted the girl. Of course, everybody protested, but the chief would not be put off. The Oregonians that had been sent out to meet us were appealed to. It was a very serious matter, they said.

The chief was an honest man and meant exactly what he said, and had a right to the girl. The majority agreed, and thought the best way out of it was to let papa marry them. This seems strange now, but it was the Indian custom to buy wives, and as we were in the heart of a warlike people, we could not safely trifle with the chief.

The girl was about to throw herself in the river from the steep bluff where we were, at which the chief, seeing her terror, relented, and led his warriors off, scornfully refusing what presents were offered him for his forbearance.

At the Dalles, about forty days further on, papa went to see the officer in command of this military post, the first one we had found, to ask about the possibility of crossing the Cascade Mountains, or

rather, the Sierra Grande del Nord, at that late season of the year. This kind officer sent a yoke of strong, fat oxen and two soldiers to see us to the summit. His name, we were told, years later, was Grant—Capt. U. S. Grant, afterward President Grant. By taking this route papa landed his little family far up the Willamette River almost in the heart of the wonderful valley. This is the most poetic, gorgeous, and glorious valley in flowers and girdle of snow-crowned mountains on the globe, and it is as fertile as it is beautiful.

Papa said he was sure we never should be able to find a more wonderful place for a home, and it didn't take much persuasion to bring us all to the same view. The place seemed like paradise after the hardships we had endured on our journey, and we were so tired of the endless traveling, day after day, and month after month. So it was decided to locate a claim near here.

Papa, as a teacher, had always been rather fastidious in his dress, and mother often told me that he always wore broadcloth with a flower in his buttonhole when he lived near Cincinnati, in reach of a tailor. And I well remember he always wore a leaf or flower in his lapel when teaching school, no matter what the quality of his coat. But here in Oregon, in this mild climate, seeing we were

nearly all naked, he said to mother one morning as he pinned a flower in his shirt bosom:

"Margaret, really and truly, we don't need any clothes in this country, except it may be some sort of a thing to pin a flower on."

In this happy frame of mind papa soon after cut a stick and, taking a small pack on his back, set out up the vast and fertile valley to find a location, a "claim." He left us under the care of a noble old missionary, E. E. Parrish, and also a Methodist preacher by the name of West. It seemed that everyone of the older immigrants was either a missionary or a preacher. And they were all good, God-fearing men, who did all they could to encourage and care for the stranger. We three boys, nine, eleven, and thirteen years of age, soon found work at clearing off brush and making rails for a neighbor close at hand. Mother would go out to work with us, sitting on a stump and knitting and talking cheerily to us when not herself at work.

We earned a cow in this way, and mother bought two others, giving a note bearing enormous interest. The cows cost $100 each. So that when papa got back after a long quest far up the valley we had three more cows, three frisky little calves, and lots of butter to sell.

Two little Jew peddlers, brothers, who had in

WE BOYS FOUND WORK MAKING RAILS FOR A NEIGHBOR.

some way got down by way of what is now Alaska from Russia, came by every week and got the butter and gave in exchange groceries and dry goods. The merchants in those days demanded more than double the purchase price of everything; but as they paid $1 a pound for butter, which was twice what it was really worth, the thing was about even. These Jew boys carried everything on their backs at first. Then they got a horse, then a wagon, then they opened a store away up at the forks of the river, where papa had found a "claim," and flourished amazingly. Then they had a big store in the biggest city; then a bank in San Francisco. And open-handed papa marveled to the end of his days, why he, too, could not have been such a "merchant."

It was a muddy, miry road away up to the Willamette Forks, with neighbors forty miles distant from one another in places and no bridges, and few ferries across the swift, deep river; but we got there at last and the spare neighbors, as was the custom, came to the "raising," and in a few days we had a home, a house, such as it was; let us call it a palace. For never was nobleman of high degree, with all his house, so happy in his castle, as was proud, brave, dear papa.

The law had been meanly changed while we were en route, cutting down the donation from

640 acres to one-half, so that the ranch was not what it should have been in area, and real value; but no one complained, and all went to work and worked from sun to sun, happy, healthy, and gaining in strength every day.

The land, unfortunately, was not well chosen. We should have located in the middle of the valley where every foot was fertile and tillable, but we had been used to woods and did not like the open. We wanted the wood for houses, fences, and the fireplace. In the rear a great mountain, topped with wonderful fir trees, gloried in the morning sun; the swift, sweet river glistened under the great big cedars and balm trees away out yonder in the boundless dooryard, where the cattle fed and fattened, and all was well.

We had managed to get through to Oregon with one team and a wagon and a few cows. They were all poor, for most of them had been yoked in with the oxen to help haul the load. We took up one claim and bought another and went to work setting out orchard and vineyard. We had the earliest and best fruit in the country, and our stock did well.

Mother made butter and cheese for market and made our house a sort of tavern, besides, and lodged and fed all the travelers who came our way. The work was very hard for her; for she had no one

to help her except a little Indian boy that papa had brought home.

Papa at first took us up the mountainside to cut down trees, cut off logs, and roll them down for rails. These rolling, tumbling, headlong logs on the steep hillsides made great sport for our little dog. But he got caught under one and was killed. Then Jimmy got caught under one. And, although he got up and laughed at our terror and dismay, papa gave up cutting the trees on the mountain, and we made rails after that from ash, maple, balm, alder, and so on, to fence our first field; worthless wood, compared to the beautiful fir, but we boys were too bold and venturesome to be left alone to wrestle with the tumbling rail cuts. For papa again was going to teach school, miles away.

He plowed and put in flax, corn, and a garden, even before we had a fence. As the fence around the house was finished, we put in an orchard, papa going far distant and bringing the trees home on his back. When we got the trees in the ground, a corral for the cattle, and when the corn and flax and all sort of things began to grow and glory in their existence, mother looked on, and said: "I tell you, boys, things are just a-humming!"

CHAPTER VI

MY FIRST DOLLAR—CALIFORNIA

I had kept a crude sort of journal, and as papa had stored in his mind every single camp and all incidents of account in all that seven months of persistent march we went over it together and filled up the broken and disconnected places. He insisted it would be of interest some day. But it was burned with the house and all its contents some years later.

I see that my birthday is set down in some books for 1841, and in others for 1842. This comes from the loss of the Bible. For when I was first in Europe and some began to ask when I was born, papa gave the former year, according to his recollection of the trivial event, while mother insisted on the latter, both giving the same day of the month. Probably one of them was right.

We got some sheep to keep on shares, and Jimmy, with his new dog, kept with them all the time, but the saucy little coyotes would just sit down round about and watch and wait for the lambs, and get them almost as fast as they came. Once he heard a lamb bleating piteously away up overhead

in the bright blue sky, and lifting his eyes he saw a great black-winged eagle making its way to the mountain top with a little white lamb in its clutches. The old primal [39] contention of nature was still with us, even in happy, peaceful, and prolific Oregon—the survival of the fittest—fightest!

We two bigger boys wrought out in the fields, and milked the cows night and morning. Mother made the butter. Papa walked to and from his school, far away in the Forks.

About this time our nearest neighbor, a learned, good man, candidate for governor, and afterward famous for classification of the Oregon grasses, nearly 200 in number, wanted to break up a field and turn under the dense growth of wild roses that was overrunning his ranch. He wanted me to drive the oxen while he held the plow.

Wild with joy I was with him early and we wrought late and long. I was barefooted and my tattered trousers reached not far below the knees and the oxen were wilful and unruly; but we stuck to it, breaking the ground matted with rose roots. I was at the same time breaking and subduing the obstinate oxen and I did not note or care for my feet or legs. We did not stop for lunch and when we got up to the house and watered and unyoked the oxen, my legs began to smart and my feet to

I LAID MY FIRST DOLLAR IN MY MOTHER'S LAP.

hurt me so much that I begged not to stay for supper, as I wanted to go home.

But he looked up and told me I had done finely with the oxen, thanked me kindly, asked me to come early next morning and then putting his hand in his pocket handed me a big silver dollar; my first, my very first dollar. I clutched it, caught in my breath with wonder and exultation and ran home holding tight and hard on my dollar till I had laid it in my mother's lap, where she sat at her little wheel spinning. Mother kissed me and cried and we cried and cried together, with delight.

Mother washed my feet and legs, washed them in warm water and milk and maybe with silent tears. She put me to bed after supper and next morning I was up very early and away at work with the oxen.

We had no newspapers as yet in reach of us, and the mails were only weekly and were very uncertain in unsettled weather, but there were rumors in the air about new gold mines to the south, on the way to California. These new placer mines [40] were in what is now called the Rouge River [41] country. The right name is Red River, so named by the early French explorers.

But while we had no newspapers within easy reach, traveling men were all the more disposed to

ask and give the news as they passed up and down by way of Oregon and into California.

There were many peddlers going up and down now. Passing preachers [42] always had been numerous from the first, and they stopped at all times and prayed late and long; for mother knew better how to prepare and serve a good meal than anyone else in the borderland. Of course they were always very welcome. But really and truly it was a great bother when they insisted, as they always did, before going on, on getting us all down on our knees and praying and praying, and praying the longest hour I ever saw.

Still, they gave lots of information, good and bad, about the new mines. And I was the most eager of all listeners. I wanted to go to the new gold mines. Do not wonder at or blame me. It was in my blood and my blood was hot for action. Do not think this was unnatural for one so young. Bear in mind I was born and cradled on wheels.

Besides these peddlers and preachers and passing immigrants who were seeking homes and came to consult papa and talk over old times, there were now many pack trains coming to Oregon and going back, often camping close by to get butter and eggs and garden truck, and they, too, had lots to tell about the mines. My parents guessed at my burn-

ing desire to be off and away, even if I had to ride the bell mule of the pack train and be cook to the greasy greasers;[43] but I kept, or tried to keep, it all to myself.

Mother had pulled, heckled, distaffed, and spun all the flax, and as we had sheared the sheep—clean, white and burrless sheep in the long waving grass in those days—she then took up the wool and soon went away with a basketful of spools and shuttlecocks to where there was a loom at a distant neighbor's, and before a week was back with a bolt of cloth as big as she could carry.

My! the plans for the placing of that bolt of cloth. Papa must have a suit; John D., who was training to teach in two little families away up on the forks of the Mohawk, must have a suit. Mother must have a petticoat, and above all, the three boys must have bathing suits.

Our second crop in Oregon was a miracle of nature's generosity. The wheat was tall, strong, bowed down with laden heads of yellow gold. The fruit trees had grown beyond conception the first year and the second blossoming they were pink and white with glory, and brown and busy wild bees from the mountains made honey while we, all of us who were not teaching school, worked as hard and as happy, too, as they. The apple trees in the

autumn were red and pink and yellow with luscious fruit. We had surely come upon a land of milk and honey. The cattle, too, were increasing in the rank, rich grasses beyond all reasonable calculation.

We had no mills within reach those first years; no machinery of any sort, and so had to winnow out our grain by tossing it in the wind, as in olden Bible days, and let the wind blow the chaff away, while the wheat fell down on the outspread wagon sheet. This wheat, boiled, then baked, or fried, made a fine substitute for bread. But sometimes we had Indian squaws with their stone pestles and deep stone mortars, grind wheat on shares, so as to have wheat bread for breakfast on Sunday when the preachers came; and this was almost every Sunday.

But at the end of two years a shrewd Yankee set up a mill for grinding wheat, a day's drive distant, and soon the report spread about that the squaws were in the habit of mixing up roasted grasshoppers with their mortar-made flour, and this, of course, drove us all to the mill to get bread for Sunday and the preachers. I can now see that this was all a fiction.

These stone mills or mortars with the long and shapely stone pestles, of a finer quality of stone, are found all up and down the Pacific coast by the miners, and not a cabin but has one or more in

the dooryard. And this same mortar and pestle is found in all the museums of Japan. But I have searched the Holy Land, and indeed all other lands I know, in vain for this primitive mill. So that I am firmly persuaded that the Oregon and California Indians came to us from Japan, most likely by way of the Aleutian Islands, or Behring Straits.

Immigrants kept coming, and the generous Oregonians going out each year to meet them. The congested lower end of the great valley—comparatively congested—began to empty out its multitude up toward our way, and new cabins glistened in the morning dew to right and left and far away before us till not a foot of vacant tillable land was left for any one.

And what noble pioneers! Poor enough they were, most of them, as were we at first, but they were all industrious, honest as a rule, and as steady as oak; devout people, who always insisted on building a church and school house, however humble, the very first thing.

But, at the same time, there came pouring in on the other side through the Golden Gate into California the most depraved and evil element that ever took human form.[44] This was the convict class from the British penal colonies—"ticket-of-leave men," some of them—almost all of them bad to begin with,

but doubly bad now with gold on every hand to be had in heaps almost for the taking.

While it had all along been conceded by my parents that I was to go, when go I must, to the gold mines, while my brother taught school along with papa, and Jimmy took care of the stock, this brutal new element made them hesitate now.

But go I must. The wheels of the covered wagon in which I had been born and bred were whirling and whirling, and I must be off. Many were going; boys, men, and even whole families were off, or about to get off, for the newly found mines out toward the country south of us, on the very edge of dreaded California, but I must be one of them. Another boy of about my age joined me. We ran away from school at night. He was bright, precocious,[45] comely, and ever so much beyond me in wit and wisdom, for he had lived in cities and mixed with people, while I had always been afraid of both.

My bright young companion fell in with a rich man, who took a liking to him, as he rode his mule behind his long pack train, and so he found employment at once. Right here, where Fremont had crossed the Klamath—named by him the Klamat—almost within a stone's throw and far down the turbulent river toward the ocean, were found some of the richest mines ever known.

Left alone I rode to where I found a party from Oregon trying to arrange to open a placer mine [46] in a deep wooded gulch down on the Klamath River. There were twenty-seven of them. One of them, a preacher, knew papa. Each man had a horse, blanket, pick, shovel and pan, a tin cup, a sheath knife, and a gun, pistols, and plenty of ammunition. They were fairly well equipped, as equipments went in those days, with mule loads of beans, bacon, coffee, sugar, and flour. They had chosen their foreman, their moderator, everything but that most important person, the cook.

I said timidly to the preacher who was moderator: "Will you let me cook and come in as a partner? I used to help mother cook!"

"But, my boy," he replied, "you will have to get up long before daylight. You will have to brown and grind and make the coffee. You will have to cook the beans and bacon, get the wood and water, weigh and keep the gold dust and bags of gold, and remain right in camp all the time."

"I'll do it; please let me try it," I said.

There was a consultation. The preacher was on my side, and it was finally agreed that if I would stick to it I could come in as full partner; but that if I did not stick close to my contract I should have to lose not only the place, but my share of gold.

I made but one proviso: I would stick to it until they could get a better cook. I tried to believe I was happy; but I was very miserable, thinking about my parents, and did not sleep well.

We had no coffee mill, and I had to pound up the tough coffee, after browning it in a frying pan, with the poll of my hatchet on a stone. I even had to use a piece of my buckskin coat—the tail of it—if you please, to pound it in. But I was not happy. I fried the beans, brown to a turn; my flapjacks were pronounced perfect, and I was in a new world. I tried to feel that I was going to get on.

In a very few days, the men, working all the time from sun to sun, and often by the great camp fires till late at night, had hewn out sluices for washing and were soon shoveling in gold, gold and gold, from the deep bed rock of the narrow little gulch with great trees hanging over head.

We "cleaned up" every Saturday evening. The gold was left sitting aside by the pile of provisions and saddles till Sunday morning, when the foreman dried it, weighed it, and divided it evenly among the twenty-eight of the camp. The men always left their bags under the head of their beds, or by the roots of the trees where they slept. We rested and washed up Sundays. The men were as kind as they could be to me. It was quite a task to get

wood and to carry all the water up from the gulch, but on Sundays when they were idle, they all lent a hand when they could.

Finally one Sunday there came along with others, a bright appearing and well-dressed man with an English sailor accent and hair parted in the middle. He sang most melodiously and with great zest. The preacher liked him, had a talk with him, and finding he was foot-loose and looking for a place, asked him to stay with us and help cook till he could do better. I was about worn out and gladly offered to let him sleep with me, as almost all the men slept double, if he would only stay and help for a little time, if ever so little.

He had the broadest toed shoes I ever saw on any man's foot. They were almost, if not quite new. The second day I asked him where he got them. He said San Francisco. Remembering how the Oregonians disliked the Californians, especially the convict and San Francisco sort, I advised him not to mention San Francisco, as we all had an idea it was a very bad place.

That night, or rather early next morning, I felt him get up. I saw him, or at least I felt I saw him, go down on tiptoe to the sluices with his big-toed shoes in his left hand. I felt about, got hold of a ramrod, and poked the nearest sleeper, pointing

down toward the sluices. Some men followed and found the man, deafened by the rush of water, picking up the nuggets in the tail of the sluice and filling the big toes of his San Francisco shoes.

They quietly led him up, putting his shoes where they always sat the gold pan and then tied him to a tree and went back to bed. I got up and got breakfast and then the men got up, heard the ugly story as they washed and ate and got ready in a very few minutes to try the man for his life. It was a sad case. I pitied him with all my heart, but knew that by every rule of miner's law and equity the man must hang.

They tried him, found him guilty, and sentenced him to hang that night at "early candle lighten," as the preacher put it.[47] A big oak tree stood, broad-boughed and stately, on the further bank, only a few steps from where the men were at work. He, in a dazed and helpless way, confessed he came from San Francisco, a crime in the eyes of Oregonians to begin with. And he hopelessly admitted that he had got big-toed shoes made on purpose to plunder miners.

CHAPTER VII

MY FIRST SONG

They took him over to the big tree, tied him securely, marked off the grave and set him to digging. I was told to help him dig his grave and not let him get away.

The foreman said gruffly: "Kid, there's going to be a hanging at early candle lighten! A hanging of some sort, sure. All the miners round about here know, and all are a-coming to a hangin'. So if he is not here, we must hang some one else. See?"

I went over to help the dazed, dumb sailor man, with his hair parted in the middle, and when we had dug down a few feet he sat down on the edge, wiped his sweating face, and took out a small newspaper. It was named, "The Matrimonial Noose."

He explained that a party of many convict men and women had come up from Australia and that some of the party had put in the long days of that voyage printing this paper. He read some very startling personals from the women of the party setting forth their merits and their charms. There was not one, with but a single exception, who did not

boast her beauty, virtue, youth, or something of that sort.

This one exception was that of a woman who wanted to get out into the gold mines and go to work. The man said she was already over in Yreka, a big town only a day or so distant, and was a good cook. I took the paper, told the man to keep on digging, and went down to the foreman with it. I left half a dozen heads huddled together over that personal, reading and re-reading it. Of course, they must hang the man; but as I, their cook, was already half dead, what could they do? Why not one of them go and get the woman?

They took the terrified, half dead and helpless convict over to dinner and asked him all sorts of questions. No, the woman was not a bad woman, only not pretty. That was the only fault he could be persuaded to admit. So it was settled that Long Dan, or Daniel Long, as he was afterwards known, should set out to bring her, if he could. We would build her a cabin. The wretched man with his grave only half dug had been told that if his story about the woman was true and Dan could bring her, he would have to help her cook. He meekly agreed that he would prefer this to being hanged.

I can now see that they had no intention of hanging the man at all. They set him to filling up

his grave and to cutting cabin logs close by so that they could throw up a cabin.

The logs being cut they put them in place at once, covering the cabin with cedar slats, from which they had made the sluices. Then the preacher who would marry them, if they wanted to be or would be married, said we must have a reception; songs and a march around, a sort of religious procession around the cabin with torches. All were to take part. And would the man we did not hang, help?

Would he? With a gasp, a breath that must have reached away down to the heels of the big-toed shoes, fairly danced with delight at the idea and began singing this chorus:

"For a woman she can do more with a man
Than a king and his whole arm-ee!"

And then the preacher asked me to make the song with that chorus at the end of each verse; to show the woman how truly important she must be in a camp of so many men and not one single woman! And this was my first offense in the line of song.

I did not know anything at all about poetry, but I was full of the Bible and Bible themes, so I first took up Samson:

Now Samson was a mighty strong man,
A mighty strong man was he;
But he lost his hair and he lost his eyes,
And also his liber-tee!
"For a woman she can do more with a man
Than a king and his whole arm-ee!"

Then I took up Daniel in the lion's den; then I took up King David and Uriah's wife, and so on. Then I concluded with the following lines about that wisest of all men:

Now, Solomon he was a mighty wise man,
A mighty wise man was he;
Aye, Solomon he had 700 wives,
And also a dyspep-see.
"For a woman she can do more with a man
Than a king and his whole arm-ee!"

You should have heard this chorus as the twenty-seven men, led by the preacher and the man we didn't hang, marched around that cabin and held high their blazing pitch-pine torches. What a rehearsal! She came! Dan smuggled her into the cabin and, with a full heart, got back and around to the preacher and whispered that they were already engaged, and now, since the cabin was all ready, they wanted to be married right off.

Then Dan led her forth, and they were married by torchlight and then the boys all went to bed, to let

the poor, honest woman, who had come so far to work, have a good night's rest. I did not see her till next morning. But I am frank to say that she had been bravely honest about her looks. She was the plainest woman I had ever seen. At least, this was my feeling at first glance. But she grew to be prettier every day as she rested, and got up great big dinners out of almost nothing.

I was very ill now and must see a doctor. Never having been strong enough to eat and assimilate meat and having here nothing at all to eat except beans and bacon and coffee, and besides having been on my feet all the time, my slim little legs became stiff and began to show purple spots—the scurvy.

I gave my share of the claims to the unfortunate creature known as "the man we didn't hang," and gave my share of the gold, thirty-one ounces, to the preacher, to take back to papa, as he and nearly all the other men with families in Oregon were going to return before the snows made the mountains impassable.

I fell in with a new man, a new manner of man, on my way to the city, a great big man, body and soul; a close companion now and then as the years went by in many lands both wild and tame.

At Yreka I collapsed and knew nothing more till I found myself in the care of a kind little China-

man with Dr. Ream pulling me through to health and strength. In the background stood the man I had seen in the trail as I came to town.

This man Ream was one of the handsomest, manliest men ever seen. He was the idol of the new city and, strange and unusual as it may seem, he is so still. He is and has ever been the king and dictator of all that end of California. They offered to send him to the Federal Senate; but he protested that he did not want to go to any place where he could not see Mt. Shasta.

When up and about, the man I had met in the trail and who stood modestly in the background, took me out and away over a snowy mountain to a new mining camp called Humbug Creek, where we wintered. Life was monotonous here, for we had to live alone in our cabin because of the intolerable toughness and roughness of the men here at The Forks, who made their focus of action and distraction in the Howling Wilderness saloon.

Here I laid the scene of "The Danites," my famous play, but have always been sorry I printed it, as it is unfair to the Mormons and Chinese. But he had a few books, besides I had brought with me from Oregon Caesar's Commentaries and a small Latin school-book, Historie Sacre, and we were neither lonely or idle. He had many theories about the

growth and formation of gold. And I think they were correct, for in all the many great gold fields I have penetrated, and that is many, I have put his ideas to the test and in all these fifty years I have rarely found his theories at fault.

Mt. Shasta is monarch of the Sierra de Nevada (mountains of snow); monarch of the entire mountain range reaching from Alaska to Mexico. True there is a higher mountain in the Sierra Madre (Mother mountain), away to the south, but it is a bold, bare eminence without form, color, or expression, and there are groups and chains of glorious snow peaks in the Sierra Grande del Norte far away to the north, of indescribable splendor, but Mt. Shasta is so solitary, so imperiously alone, that you never once question his supremacy; you do not even ask his altitude. He is, geographically, artistically, supremely supreme; as alone as God upon the great white throne.

Mt. Shasta is not a gold-bearing mountain, because it was born of fire. Gold and fire do not affiliate. And yet, after more than fifty years of persistent and cruel quest, they are still madly searching for gold in Mt. Shasta, and in all its immediate, vast and stately environs.

A "stampede" was on. Miners were flying like fugitives of a beaten army for the south side of

MT. SHASTA IS MONARCH OF THE SIERRA DE NEVADA.

Mt. Shasta. We were two men, a boy and two Indian children.

The Indian children, protégés of the Prince, content enough at all times and places, were quite at home when we came upon the imperial mountain. They had been born and bred on and about the stately steeps, and Klamat, the boy, was more than at home in leading us through new and unknown ways so as to avoid the stream of strong, rude men who were swarming through the land, up rivers, down creeks and canyons in quest of gold.

With the first coming of birds in the spring, Klamat found a place that might have been compared to Paradise. It was not yet in full flower, but looking out from our little wood-walled cabin over the dense forests to the south we could see the summer coming in glorious procession up the plunging, foaming McCloud River.

Klamat was sullen, morose, a true Indian when a true Indian is angered. But he kept the camp hooks well hung with venison and all good things of the chase. The Prince, out of pity, had picked up a feeble and bookish old botanist. The bookish old man was stronger now and kept on steadily with his botanizing. The girl went in quest of her kindred, found them and brought them to see us.

But the Prince had plans of his own; great plans which he slowly unfolded to me; making me almost believe these plans for the solution of the perishing savages were my own. Briefly, the idea was to make this mountain sacred to the Indians. To persuade the United States to proclaim it a city of refuge, a sanctuary; in short, a sort of Indian republic.

There was a city down yonder on the Sacramento in the heart of the richest sort of mines, not a wild city as Yreka was, but a city of books, beautiful women and gentlemen. It was a long, hard ride distant, but Klamat knew all the trails and he and the Prince were often gone for days. I, of course, was not told all his plans and enterprises. I only know that he had everything brought to our camp that comfort could demand and that, as usual, he seemed to have heaps and heaps of money.

Meantime I had joined Mountain Joe in locating Soda Springs ranch, and then riding away south to Sonora for a band of half-wild horses [48] which he actually bought by the acre; they were as cheap as that! He brought Mexicans with us to break them en route. But when I got back I eagerly hastened up to our mountain home on the steeps.

I do not know why I stood out, looking down over the woods, watching, waiting for the Prince, for I was not really lonesome; never in my life in

most dismal places was I ever very lonesome; but somehow I felt that there was going to be trouble. We had a good cabin; it was full of good things; we were on good terms with our Indian neighbors. The Prince had gold dust, and gold coin also, lying loose and at hand for all. What trouble could there possibly be in the air?

I felt sorry somehow about something of which I knew nothing at all. And when they came I was certain there was bad news. But no big-hearted man will bother you with bad news at once unless compelled to. The wild Indian and the cultivated Englishman are exactly alike in this. The time to break bad news is after dinner, as you sit quietly at your camp-fire or in your club with all at rest.

After an ample feast came talk of new books, the newspapers, and the Prince pointed to a paragraph in the Shasta City Courier. Briefly, a body of Modocs had taken a position in Castle Rocks, cut off all communication to the north, captured the mule mail train, killed not only men, but women and children, and all the country was in consternation.

Restless young men of the Trinities and Shastas were on the warpath, and Captain Crooks had come all the way from Fort Jones, near Yreka, and was to fall upon the Modocs in the rear, while Judge

Gibson was raising a band of scouts, both red and white, to try and open the mail line and avenge the massacre of women and children.

Soon the Prince went south and I took up my abode with Mountain Joe and friendly Indians.

Mountain Joe, who had been one of Fremont's men, was doing all he could to cultivate a little valley where he kept the mail station and a little mountain tavern. He had dug an irrigation ditch and he and I had left the station, as there was no mail now or travel of any kind, and had gone up the ditch into the woods to look after the water. Suddenly horses, some of them with feathered arrows in their sides, came dashing past, wild with terror. Looking down toward the river we saw smoke, flames and then a line of Indians, loaded with plunder, wading the river and disappearing in the woods that hung on the further bank.

Joe raised a small bunch of indolent men, such as always hang about places of the sort on the border, brown men, red men, and followed—a dangerous thing to do. But he must know who they were and where they were heading. Soon it was clear that they were climbing for the Modoc camp, away up in the clouds of Castle Rocks.

Mountain Joe now turned back and led his weary men down the river till he fell in with Judge Gibson

on his way up Castle creek to join Captain Crooks of the regular army, as Crooks had ordered, ascending Castle creek, with his Indian scouts in the van. With a sharp detour to the right we soon compassed the granite pinnacles. But still there was no sign of the regular army. Our Indian scouts reported us in close approach to the hostile Indians.

A short consultation was held and Mountain Joe insisted that it was now impossible to turn back or hope to escape without a battle. A hasty lunch was eaten in the brush and then we gathered up our guns and crept forward. Their fortress was in a great mass of rocks, almost hidden by climbing chaparral and clinging vines, and nearly surrounded by a marsh.

Joe put me behind a little pine in the very edge of the open marsh with a young Indian and pushed on to put others of the scant battalion in place. I stood my gun against the pine, looked to my pistols, tightened my belt and then put some extra bullets in my mouth, as I seemed to recall all I had ever read about fighting Indians. I was to be in my first real battle. Suddenly there was a simultaneous crash of arms. Smoke encircled the hostile camp and the Indian at my side rushed across the narrow opening and fell, pierced with arrows.

The little marsh valley was clouded with smoke.

But all from our own guns. This was, perhaps, the last battle on this continent with Indians where they used only the bow and arrow. We found fire-arms a-plenty in their camp, but they were not used. Our prisoners told us they did not know how to load them. Night was coming on. We must finish the fight. White men do not fight Indians to advantage in the dark!

Joe led around to where Gibson stood on the rocks behind the trees, looking anxiously up and out for the regulars. He had already lost several of his Indian volunteers and one white man.

Despairing at last of any aid from Captain Crooks, he crept down to Joe and his anxious men, and said: "Boys, we must make a charge through the marsh at this narrow neck and finish it hand-to-hand. Who will go with me?"

Nearly if not all eagerly pressed to his side, but he hastily chose only the few who were best equipped with hand weapons, and dashed on through the long, strong grass and mud and water. Joe had made us all cut holes in our blankets and put our heads through these openings; and they were the best shields in the world. Flint arrows are like little saws on either edge. Their flint teeth catch in the wool and will not go through.

Our charge had been so sudden that there was

no time for the enemy to rally. But for all that we were met by a fearful shower of arrows, and I think it safe to say that each man had at least a dozen arrows clinging to his blanket as we rushed into the brushy fortress. But we all got safely through the marsh. Soon Gibson held up a hand with an arrow through it, and some others were hit in the hands and arms. But we kept on till we began to hear our own men coming on and up from other like charges through the marsh, and it seemed we had entirely won.

Gibson called a halt, so as to be careful about hitting our own men, when suddenly there was another deluge of arrows, and I dropped at his side. I felt no real pain, as one would think, with an arrow thrust through the side of my neck and face till the point stuck away out at the back of my neck, but I was stunned. It seemed to me as if my head had been crushed, and I remember putting up my hand to feel my head. This was, perhaps, because the arrow had pierced so nearly the base of the brain. I do not remember anything else about that day, and very little else about the next year. In fact, my memory and, in truth, all my faculties failed me for ever so long after that.

A young man kneeled down as another held my head, and cutting off the arrow's point, drew the

shaft through my face. I felt this and felt a relief as they heaped up leaves and made a pillow for my head. I remember hearing men shout from the top of the savage fortress and knew the fight was over and won.

The disabled men were carried down from out Castle Rock by women prisoners. The one who carried me on her back had lost both her boys and husband in the battle. She was not kind at first. They tied my head close to hers so that she could steady it with her hand. Then I talked to her in her own tongue, which I had learned very perfectly from our Indian children. She then told her sorrows and said I must be her boy in place of the ones killed. When I did not or could not answer, she told me if I would be her boy she would not drop me over the ledge as she intended to do when she came to the narrow place where only the mountain sheep went down. They laid me under some cedars down by the Sacramento River and the Indian woman was truly a mother to me.

Then papa came after nearly a month's ride through the mountains and watched with me all the summer. But I did not know him until late in the fall, when I slowly began to grow stronger, in mind and body. He decided at last that he

must go back to mother and the younger children. I was not yet able to make the long ride, so I was taken to Shasta City. The people were good to me and made up a little school in a camp not far away, where I taught miners by night and tried to mine by day, promising papa to come home by way of San Francisco in the spring.

But when spring came and Mount Shasta stood out white and glorious above the clouds and beckoned me, I hailed him as a brother. I, too, would rise above the clouds that mantled me and, in spite of all protests, would slip away and join my red men once more at his feet.

But I was not a brother of the gleaming and all glorious mountain. I was only a companion of the clouds that gathered here and there about his brow; as weak, as helpless and vacillating as they. When the Modocs rose up one night and massacred eighteen men, every man in Pitt River valley, I alone was spared; and spared only because I was *Los bobo,* the fool. Then followed more battles and two more wounds. My mind was as the mind of a child and my memory is uncertain here. I only know I made many and such piteous mistakes. In fact, if I were to take the mistakes out of my life during these years, I should have but little left. My wound in the face and neck was

still serious. I could not lie down, but took such rest as I could get in my rovings among the Indians, half reclining against a tree in my blanket or skins. I was like a real Indian.

But how kind these people were, how considerate! I was as a babe and they treated me in my weakness as if I had been newly born to their tribe. But soon I was stronger, in body and soul. The women gave me gold—from whence I do not know; but suppose that they found it in the sands of the creek down below in the valley.

It was interesting to see how quickly the Indians came to appreciate the value of gold after the first Argonauts came to California. All their lives they had been accustomed to see the shining pebbles in the mountain brooks; but they never had any value for them until the white men came to wash the precious particles from the sand and gravel, and carry them away in their treasure bags.

Soon I went to San Francisco to rest some more before going back to the home in Oregon. Ere long I was strong enough for the journey, and, like a prodigal, set out for the home that I had not visited for three long perilous years.

Father and Mother were just the same, but my brothers had grown taller, and seemed much older. Little Sister Ella had died. The hardships and

privations of the long, weary journey were more than she could bear, and she never was well again.

I was filled with remorse when my loving parents told how they had worried about me during my long absence; for I never once had written them a letter in all that time.

The house that the neighbors had helped us to build had been replaced by a new one, the first one having burned when the shakes on the roof had been set on fire by sparks from the chimney. The fire must have been smoldering for several hours before it burst into flames; for the house burned down at night, many hours after father had covered the coals on the hearth.

It was a miracle that all of the family escaped, for not a single article of furniture was saved. The precious journal that I had kept of our long, long journey to Oregon went up in smoke with all the other things. I have had to depend on my memory in writing this account, but fortunately my mother has been able to recall many events that I had almost forgotten.

Papa had wanted to come to Oregon where he could have plenty of land for farming. Up here at the forks of the Willamette his dream came true, and he had cattle and sheep and orchards and endless forests; but he did little of the work on the

farm himself. Most of the time he was teaching school in one of the settlements.

I felt the need of more education and acting on Papa's advice went to the best school I could find in our new country, then went to college, taught school, studied law at home, but ever and ever the lure of the mountains called and called, and I could not keep my mind on my books. But I could keep my mind on the perils I had passed. I could write of them, and I did write of them, almost every day. The Tale of the Tall Alcalde, Oregonian, Californian, With Walker in Nicaragua—I had lived all these and more; and they were now a part of my existence. If you care to read further of my life, making allowance for poetic license, you will find these literally true.

Meantime I was admitted to the bar. Then came the discovery of gold in Idaho, Montana, and so on, and I was off like a rocket, with the rest. I came back to my gentle parents with gold enough to build a beautiful new home and had money to buy a newspaper besides.

My elder brother went to the Civil War and his mother never saw him any more. I plead for peace in my paper, believing in papa's Quaker creed, and it was suppressed. I went into the mountains of Oregon, where hosts of my California friends had

opened mines, and after leading them against the hostile savages, was elected their judge. Then I wrote and re-wrote, but was never quite strong until after I rolled up my papers and suddenly found myself in London, where I published my first real book, *Songs of the Sierras.*

I went back home again, then to South America, England again, and the continent, published more books, then went home by way of the Orient.

Having met the Prince, on a visit to Paris from Nicaragua, he helped me to recall our life among the Modocs, adding such romance of his own as he chose. Then the book was translated and published in both Paris and London. It was a massive book; and a gold mine. It was brought out by Bently, publisher to the Queen, in London, under the title of "Life Among the Modocs." In Paris it was called, "Scenes de la vie des mineurs et des Indiens de Californie."

Grateful that I was born in an age of active and mighty enterprise and exalting, even as a lad, in the primitive glory of nature, wild woods, wild birds, wild beasts, I began, as my parents pushed west through the wilderness, to make beauty and grandeur the god of my idolatry, even before I yet knew the use of words. To give expression to this love and adoration, to lead others to see grandeur,

good, glory in all things animate or inanimate, rational or irrational, was my early and has ever been my one aspiration.

My first lines, and in truth, all my lines, as a rule, were descriptive stories of the lands I knew, so that my poems are literally my autobiography.

I had begun my wanderings before I even knew how to walk, and after the death of my parents I began this story of our early struggles, to let the world learn and ever remember that "in those days there were giants in the land."

The Pilgrims of Plymouth Rock were giants, "mighty men who were of power and renown," as also were those of Jamestown; gentle mental and moral giants. And their children and their grandchildren, who pushed out, in the middle of the last century, for the vast westmost sea, were more truly giants than they or any others named in history; for these made such a venture as never man made before in song or story. There was never room, in all the old world, for this three and four thousand miles of wilderness, wild beasts and wilder men, even if there had been the giants.

The little story of our pilgrimage is simply that of thousands and hundreds of thousands who peopled the ultimate west. We were, perhaps, a little more reliant on, or a little more dependent on

Providence, a little more prayerful than the average, perhaps, for while others carried guns to protect them the head of our little party never laid hand to a gun, never fired a shot in all his long life.

All the vast multitude, as in the exodus of old, in quest of the Promised Land, was, as a rule, religious, and buried their dead with hymns and prayers, all along that dreary half year's journey on which no coward ever ventured, and where the weak fell by the wayside, leaving a natural selection of good and great people, both in soul and body.

Our vast graveyard, of what was once the American desert, is now, in places, cities, villages, fertile farms. "The Ship in the Desert" and "Death Valley" are no more, but the atmosphere is there still, the room, the mirage, the cobalt blue of midday, the copper and bronze of sunset. The only question is, have I been true to color, clime, actualities? Is my mighty ocean the real ocean or an imaginary one? Will those who care to follow through these strange lands or over these storm-torn seas, for either profit or pleasure, say I cried aloud in the wilderness, a false prophet, or that I knew my mission and followed it quietly and truly, as best I knew?

These are questions not to be answered now, but generations hence. This brilliant age of enterprise, of railroad levels and irrigating canals, is busy

fashioning the path for the poets to come after us. We are boring tunnels through Olympus [49] for traction cars, we would tap and dam and drain even the river Lethe [50] to water the desert, were that dreamful conception of song and fable to be found with us. But bear in mind we are only plowing, sowing, now, making ready for the reaper, the happy harvester of song, who will come to his own, and all in good time, when we of today, the workers and the builders, shall not be forgotten. Only let us build true, level, square, and deserve to be remembered.

AFTERWORD

For the most part the narrative just concluded deals with Joaquin Miller's recollections of his life from early boyhood until he was about twenty years old. The westward journey of the Miller family to Oregon was concluded in 1854. Then a youth of about thirteen, Joaquin Miller became a miner in California, having adventures to which he alludes in the last chapter of this volume.

In 1860 Miller returned to Oregon and studied law, finally opening a law office of his own in Canon City and becoming a judge. From early boyhood he had written verses that had some merit, though he was ignorant of the rules of versification and of grammar. His real literary career started between 1866 and 1870 while he was still practicing law. In 1870 Miller went abroad, traveling in southern Europe and in England. It was during this period that his first real volume of verses, *Songs of the Sierras,* was published and met with praise from English critics.

There followed publication of several successful plays, including *The Danites in the Sierras,* and several more volumes of poems, among them *Songs of the Sunland* (1873), *Songs of the Desert* (1875), and *Songs of Italy* (1878). He was also the author of minor prose works.

As Miller remarks in this volume, "All my lines, as a rule, were descriptive stories of the lands I knew, so that my poems are literally my autobiography." The most lasting of all of his poetry probably is contained in *Songs of the Sierras,* a collection almost wholly inspired by the mountains he loved.

After returning from England to the United States, Miller

settled in Washington, D. C., and embarked on a career as a journalist. In 1887 he returned to California, where he died February 17, 1913. In compliance with his last wishes, his body was cremated and the ashes carried up the Sierras and cast to the winds.

NOTES

1. The covered wagon used by the emigrants in the overland trip to California and Oregon was only a heavy farm wagon with a cover of canvas or homespun. Auger holes were bored in the sides of the wagon box to hold the ends of stout hickory bows that extended from side to side and formed an archway over which the cover was spread.
2. The Boones and the de Witts moved from Pennsylvania to North Carolina about the year 1755. There was a rather large migration of settlers to North Carolina at that time, because the Cherokee Indians, who had been hostile to the settlers, had just been driven beyond the Blue Ridge.
3. Tecumseh's brother, known as the Prophet, was alarmed by the steady advance of the English into the Mississippi Valley and the region of the Great Lakes and in 1811 led an uprising of several of the tribes against them. He was defeated by a force under General Harrison near the Tippecanoe River. For this victory the General, who afterwards became President, was nicknamed "Tippecanoe." A year later Tecumseh learned of the war between the English and the Americans and joined forces with the English. His warriors took part in the battle in which the author's grandfather was slain.
4. It seems remarkable that any one could have written well with a quill pen. One could be used for only a short time, as it was very flexible and soon lost its

shape. In the early schools much of the teacher's time was spent in making pens from goose quills that the pupils brought from home.

5. In every section of the country improved roads and bridges came long after the first settlers, whose first concern was to clear enough land for a pasture and a cornfield. On page 46 the author tells of crossing the first large bridge that he had ever seen.
6. Doubtless the fire was lighted with a piece of steel and a flint. On page 26 the author tells about seeing sulphur matches for the first time, several years after this event.
7. Paper used to cover windows was oiled to make it waterproof. It was not strong enough to bear the force of strong winds, and usually there was a door to cover it at night and in stormy weather.
8. Puncheons were made by splitting logs into thin boards or planks instead of sawing them. The surface of a puncheon was sometimes smoothed with a broad axe, but it was usually very rough and uneven.
9. There were no free schools in Indiana at this time. Each school was in charge of a school committee, which provided a school house and selected the teacher. The constable was required to collect the tuition from the parents of the children.
10. The Indians were about the only people in the new country who had any money. They received it from the Government in installments for the land they had sold.
11. Fox squirrel: the common black squirrel of the Middle West.
12. The making of maple sugar from the sap of the maple tree was one of the things the white settlers learned from the Indians. Maple sugar was one of the four

important products that America gave to the world, the others being potatoes, tobacco, and Indian corn.

A sugar camp in early times was made by hanging the kettles on a stout pole whose ends rested in the forks of two convenient trees. The Indians often froze the sap, threw away the ice that formed, and kept only the sweeter portion of the sap that did not freeze. It was a wasteful practice, but reduced the work of boiling the sap to make the sugar.

The trees in the sugar bush, as the grove of maple trees was called, were tapped in the early spring, as soon as the winter's snow began to melt. Whenever the temperature fell below freezing, the sap stopped running until it became warmer.

13. Shakes: rough shingles made by splitting short logs into thin strips instead of sawing them.
14. Magistrate: Justice of the Peace, who is the lowest judicial officer in our system of government.
15. Doggery: a place where intoxicating liquors were sold.
16. Friction matches were invented in 1832, but they were expensive at first and did not reach frontier settlements until some time later.
17. Marco Polo: a Venetian navigator, made a number of distant voyages in the early part of the fourteenth century. When he returned, he told such marvelous tales about things he had seen that few people believed him.
18. Primitive: old fashioned, or out of date.
19. Trundle bed: a small low bed for children that was kept under a large bed in the day time.
20. The warp made from flax was linen, and much stronger than the warp made from wool.
21. The purchase of the clocks for which he had no use may suggest why Mr. Miller did not succeed as a store keeper.

22. Captain Fremont's explorations were financed by the U. S. Government.
23. The Erie Canal from Buffalo to Albany.
24. Tallow dip: rough candles made by dipping pieces of candle wick again and again in melted fat.
25. Picayune: a small Spanish coin worth about 6½ cents.
26. This was a mistaken notion. People did not know at that time that fever and ague, or malaria was caused by the bite of a malarial mosquito.
27. Seventeenth day of March: St. Patrick's Day.
28. A rifle has a twisted groove or rifling that causes the bullet to leave the muzzle with a whirling motion. When the rifling becomes worn, a locksmith may rebore the barrel to make it a "smooth-bore."
29. The flint used to discharge a gun was fastened to the hammer and caused a spark when it fell against the powder pan.
30. The Roman senate was afraid of Caesar and Pompey, the two most powerful men in the empire, and ordered them to disband their armies. Caesar agreed to do this if Pompey would, also. Both were undecided for a time, but at last Caesar led his army across the Rubicon river, which separated the province that Caesar was supposed to rule from the rest of the Roman Empire. Since that time "crossing the Rubicon" has been used as a figurative expression for making a decision.
31. Pawpaw: the custard apple tree.
32. Israel: the chosen people.
33. St. Joseph.
34. Brisket: breast of an ox.
35. Cairn: heap.
36. Cottonwood: Carolina poplar.
37. The geographical order here is wrong. Green River is one of the main tributaries of the Colorado River

and they must have crossed it before they reached Salt Lake City.

38. Sand or other obstruction in the barrel of a gun will usually cause it to burst when it is discharged.

39. Primal: first.

40. Placer mining: washing gold from sand and gravel.

41. Rouge: the French word for red.

42. These were the circuit riders of the pioneer days in the West. Most of the homes that they visited were distant from any church.

43. Greasy greasers: Spaniards or Mexicans. California had formerly been a part of Mexico, and at this time most of its inhabitants were Spaniards and Mexicans. They spoke the Spanish language and were much disliked by the people who had settled in Oregon.

44. The British government had freed many of its deported criminals from the penal colonies in Australia and transported them to California, on condition that they would not return to any of the English possessions.

45. Precocious: having a mind too well developed for one of his age.

46. In placer mining some of the water of a stream was passed through a wooden flume or trough. Then sand and gravel that contained gold was thrown into the flame, a little at a time. The gold was much heavier than the materials with which it was mixed and settled to the bottom of the flume as the water washed the sand and gravel away.

47. The penalty for stealing gold from a miner was hanging, but it was seldom resorted to. Banishment was much more common.

48. The wild horses in California and other states of the southwest were the descendants of horses that had run away from the Spaniards.

49. Olympus: a mountain in Greece on whose summit the gods of mythology were supposed to live.
50. Lethe: a river from which the ancients believed that the dead drank to make them forget their earthly troubles. Lethe means forgetfulness.

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